Life's Little Pitfalls

A. Maude Royden

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Life's Little Pitfalls

LIFE'S LITTLE PITFALLS

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By

A. Maude Royden

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"Christ Triumphant," etc.

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YOUTH

WE are always inclined to remind the young that the world is at a crisis in its history; that humanity is making a great choice; and that upon them a great deal depends. Of course it is true, but as a matter of fact, it is *always* true. Each crisis looks portentous, but it is not any more portentous than it always was. Every new generation has the chance of making the world over, and every new generation is faced with a great choice, and those words of Rupert Brooke which, applied to the world of 1914, come to us now with something almost of irony, have their immortal truth. It is always true when the young begin to grow up that—

> "Honour has come back as a king to earth,
> And paid his subjects with a royal wage,
> And nobleness walks in our ways again,
> And we have come into our heritage."

That seemed dramatically true in 1914. It does not seem quite so true of that particular year

now as it did then; but it *is* true, always, and every generation "comes into its heritage," and the young have it always in their power to bring honour again to earth, and nobleness to walk in all our ways. The world is always suffering, and suffering is a challenge to every generous spirit to try and find out why it is there and to put it right. The young do not love suffering. They are right not to love it. There is something morbid in the delight in pain that sometimes grows upon one—I suppose from a kind of protective instinct—because there is so much pain in the world. But the healthy reaction, the revolt of the young against suffering, is right and beautiful and God-given. Suffering is a challenge bringing home to us the fact that something is wrong. Therefore to hate it, to rebel against it, and to seek to get rid of it, is right.

But this generation has gone through a time of such intense suffering, and is still under the shadow of such suffering—for it is now eleven years since the war began, and the young ones of to-day were only eight, nine and ten years old then, so that the war is like a dark shadow rather than a fact—that it has altered their attitude and taken its toll of their vitality, and even those who were babies when the war began have the shadow of that war upon their spirits. Any schoolmistress or master will tell you that the children who were born during the period of the

war are paying the debt in their nerves, in the difficulty which they have in facing life; as well as those who were actually broken in the war.

That debt we have to pay for a long time yet, or rather, let me say, they have to pay it. There is among the younger generation a sense of insecurity, a sense of the shortness of life and the possibility of death which was foreign to the generation to which I belong, to whom the permanence of things was far more obvious than their transience. In the youth of to-day there is a sense of the passing of life and the uncertainty of things which has always to be taken into account when one is thinking of the way in which they look at life. It results in one of two ways of thought: either, because life is short, they say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"; or they say, "This debt of pain, this agony of suffering, means that there is something tremendously wrong with the world, and that wrong it is for us to put right." I suppose the first attitude, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die" is very common. When I read the newspapers, I could think it was so common that there was no one who did not have it! The frivolity of the young people of to-day is the theme of every moralist and almost every journalist and preacher. After all, since after six years of so-called "peace," the world is still upon the brink of war, and those people who believed that war was going to come

to an end have proved mistaken, and the young have so little control over the mistakes that are made by elder people, they may well argue—"Let us take what we can get! Let us enjoy ourselves! We can only be young once. Life may be long, but youth is short. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

I am almost inclined to say to those people, if you *can* do it, do it! *If you can do it.* It is true that we have made the world, we elder ones, into a ghastly mess, and in the last ten or eleven years it has been the young people who have paid the price; the men who have never come back, or who have come back shattered; the girls who lost their mates in the war; the state of society into which the young are growing up, and which gives them a devastating sense of not being wanted. Is not that the worst wrong that can be done to young life—to make the young feel that they are not wanted? Young people who are just coming away from school, or from college, full of a generous enthusiasm, full of dreams, sometimes fantastic dreams, and yet noble dreams, of what they will do in the world and for the world, are now suffering this great wrong. They find a world in which there is no room for them, a world in which they cannot even get work, let alone work in which they can find scope for their idealism and their enthusiasm, a world in which it is a struggle to get a footing at all, a world in which,

instead of people being grateful for what you can do to serve it, you have to be grateful if you can get any kind of work at all. Those gifts which you were beginning to develop at school or at college, sometimes great gifts for original and creative work, the world does not seem to want. A young artist who does lovely creative work has instead to draw cheap drawings for fashion plates. A young musician who has begun to know what art is, who has something of that musical conscience which for years this country seemed to have lost, finds the world ruled by greedy commercial people, who care nothing for good art, but only want art that will pay, and who will not give him a chance unless he is prepared to sing cheap songs, and play bad music.

It is the sense that the world does not want you or does not want the best of you, that is the real wrong done to the younger generation to-day. When such boys and girls realise—consciously or unconsciously—that the world does not really ask for their best, they will perhaps take what they can get and not be worried by any mad desire to reform, and to change, and to move the world. For indeed, it seems, the world does not move, and you waste your young life trying to move it. You might at least have got something for yourself, so that, when you were old, you could say, at any rate I enjoyed my life while I had it! When the young take that point of view, they

may argue that it does no harm. They do not want to do anything very bad after all. Only just to be let alone and not worried with these everlasting problems which we elder people created for them, and now expect them to solve!

If you can do that—but no! Even if you can do it, don't do it! Because, you see, if you take life like that, live your own life and leave the world to go to hell in its own way—if you do that, your own life becomes cramped and small. It is not young, it is old, to think that you can hold so tightly the thing that you can snatch. That is not youth, and it is not the spirit of youth. Do not let us make you old before your time. If you hold on to anything too tight, it begins to wither. It is like holding a flower in too hot and close a hand. It withers. It would have lasted longer and given you greater pleasure if you had left it where it was growing, and loved it. So, if you take life itself, which is so fair and lovely, and hold it too greedily, and make your personal advantage of it, and your personal enjoyment, it begins to wither in your hands, and you say "youth is short." Yes, indeed, it is short, if you treat it like that—terribly short—for in a little while your interests contract, your vitality flags, you lose that generous enthusiasm which makes the world your workshop and your heritage. Living people must change. They cannot help it. They cannot stand still. So you must either

let your interests grow, or they will contract and narrow, and what seems so innocent and harmless now—just to let the world go its own way and take what you can get—does not really, in the end, make either for happiness or for youth. You get stifled in that narrow little life of yours, which grows always narrower and narrower.

Look abroad. What is your heritage? The world itself! The world is your heritage, and if you find a difficulty in establishing that, the fault is yours. Yes, yours. It is the fashion nowadays to speak of young and old as though they belonged to two different species. When I was working in the suffrage movement, people used to speak sometimes as though men and women belonged to totally different species. Even that was less preposterous than the modern habit of spelling youth with a capital Y, and age with a capital A, and speaking as though they had no interests in common, no common humanity, but were two absolutely different species, of which the one beginning with a Y was absolutely and perfectly good, and the one beginning with A hopelessly and irredeemably bad.

That is not true and, because it is not true, it is a pity to go on believing it. It is true that the older generation partly inherited and partly made terrible mistakes. It is not true that they pushed on to the young the whole payment of the price. Younger brothers and sisters, it is gen-

erally true that your parents love you better than you love them. That is not unnatural or wrong. The debt that you owe them you will repay to your own children. You also will love them more than they love you. Does that seem to you untrue? Well, do you know, Macdougal gives a very interesting example in his great work on Social Psychology. He reminds us that once in a great persecution in Rome it was noticed that many sons denounced their fathers, but *no father ever denounced his son.*

In the war, one of the most poignant tragedies was that of the older generation who saw those for whom they had sacrificed much, whom they had brought into the world, and to whom they had expected to hand on the torch of life, dying in their stead. Of how many of us older people is that not true? We had sons, nephews, friends, to whom we looked to go further, to carry the torch much further on, than we could hope to do. They are dead: and it is cheap, is it not, to say that one would rather have died than let them die? But sometimes it is true.

I know of a family, a large family and most of them married, but only one had a child and all the hopes of that family were on that boy's head. He went out and was killed. Can you imagine, you younger people, the sense of baffled and frustrated love in the hearts of all those older ones? Do you not *know* it would have been easier for

most of them to die than to let him die? If there was one person in all their family circle that they would not have sacrificed, it was he. Think of that saying of Rupert Brooke's about the gift of the slain of their unborn children—"Those who would have been their sons they gave, their immortality." No one can read that without realising that it is the most poignant line in the whole sonnet. Their sons they gave—their unborn sons, their immortality. For it is immortality, in a sense, to hand on the torch of life to someone else. But to the impersonal sense of frustrated and baffled love which the younger man feels who has had no son is added in the case of parents the personal sense of loss of one already known and loved, so that the loss is doubled. Do not, in your resentment against the older world, forget that the older generation in spite of all, has paid in blood and agony for the mistakes it made.

And you—you younger ones? These men, these Rupert Brookes, died not for us, but for you; for the old world they had no great love, but the new world—it was for that they died. You think we owe them a debt? Yes, but you owe them a much greater debt. For you they "poured out the red sweet wine of youth" and "laid the world aside," and work, and joy, and "that serene that men call age." They gave it for the younger generation, and you are here and have your chance because of them.

Well, but what a world! So indifferent, so despairing, so materialistic, so determined to go to war again, so indifferent it seems, to the things that the noblest of the younger generation care about. Must you, then, repeat the mistakes of which you are complaining? If the world does not seem to want you, its real need is all the more. A world in which the younger generation has not got room to grow up, is a scandalously ill-arranged and suffering kind of world. Because we did not set it right, you are suffering. Well, but you must set it right, lest others have to suffer! If every younger generation as it grows up and finds the world slow to change (and God knows it is slow to change) derives from that merely a grudging resentment, and thinks, "If the world won't change, and treats us badly, we will just enjoy ourselves," then the world remains in this pit, and all those things which you resent against the older generation you are laying up for your children. You must change it, and I will tell you why.

Because you alone *can* change it. In order to change the world, you must first believe that change is possible. But it is very difficult for older people to believe it. They too once tried to change it. They too once dreamed their dreams. And in one generation, in one lifetime, we do not see much change. We see so little that we begin to think, towards the end of our

lives, that change is impossible, and all those silly, worn-out tags of worldly wisdom—"You can't change human nature," and that sort of thing—seem true at last. We grow so terribly accustomed to failure, because so many blows have fallen upon us, so many disappointments have overtaken us, that at last it becomes almost impossible to believe that the world can greatly change.

I remember just when the war broke out meeting Felix Moscheles, one of the world's greatest workers for peace. He died shortly afterwards: I suppose the war killed him. I remember, when I took his hand, it felt cold and lifeless, and he looked almost as though the spirit in him had died already, for all his life's work had apparently gone down for nothing in that hell. That which happened to him happens in lesser ways to all of us. We all have our hopes, and dreams, and ideals; and over and over again we fail, or—even worse—we succeed and find our success a caricature of the thing we hoped for. Sometimes I think the great reformers must almost wish they had not succeeded. They could have gone on dreaming of what success would be like, then; but when they have succeeded, actually succeeded, the ideal they loved is coarsened by realisation and warped by the compromises that had to be made. The thing that was to them a dream and a vision has become a caricature when

seen in reality. You have not yet experienced that, or have not experienced it as the old have, and therefore, while there are some old who are young in spirit and still believe the world *can* change and will, there are far more who are young in years to whom that belief is their natural inheritance. You can believe the world will change, and your belief is just. You are right, and those who despair are wrong. Your faith is justified by reason. All the anticipations of all the pessimists in the world cannot hide the fact that the human race has gone forward, has gone amazingly forward, and if you look long enough you will see that those who died broken-hearted because their ideals seemed such a caricature when they were realised, were justified in the end. You, looking back, can see how great they really were and how wise. You can see that in spite of their faults and defects, their ideals did lift the world a little further along the road and make it possible for us to believe that the world can change and does.

Do you remember how Robert Louis Stevenson said once when old people told him that when he was as old as they were he would think as they did—"Very likely I shall, but that does not prove I shall be right!" Very likely you will think old thoughts when you are old in years. Very likely you too will say that the world cannot change; but that does not prove that you will be

right! No, it is now that you are right, now while you believe in great possibilities, in much greater possibilities than the world has dared to hope. There is no sense in saying "because things have always been so, they always will be so." Your ideals may yet be nobly realised. Your hope may not, in realisation, prove a failure, a caricature. The fact that it has often been so is no proof whatever that it must be so, and there is at least rational ground for believing that, however slowly, the world does go forward, and that humanity rises slowly indeed, but certainly. In the long-recorded ages of science we see that humanity evolving.

Since you can believe this and older people often cannot, it is for you to do it. The world will not be changed by those who believe it cannot be changed. Such people may go on working, from a sad sense of duty, for a future in which they have ceased to believe; but it is those who believe who will bring it about, and since it is possible to you to believe, possible from the very fact that you have not been so bludgeoned as we older ones have been, the tools are to you. Use them. As long as you believe in the possibility of progress you are young; when you lose it you are old. For youth and age have nothing essentially to do with years. We are all immortal spirits. Whence do we come and what was our history before we came here? I do not know,

but this I know: that faith in the possibilities of God, faith in the capacity of man to realise and to respond to a great ideal, is the very spirit of youth, whatever our mortal years, and as long as we have it our spirits are eternally young. It is a blasphemy against God to deny that the world can change. It is blasphemy against man to say that when he sees the highest he will not seek after it. Believe it, and go forward, for once believing it, you will not be able to say again, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Inspiration will come to you which will teach you the very opposite of that: he that seeks to save his life is the one that loses it, and he that is willing to cast it away is the one to whom life comes ever more and more abundantly.

You see the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, and you hear a great voice out of heaven, saying, "The dwelling place of God is with men, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."

MIDDLE AGE

OUR Lord never reached middle age, and I suppose that is, fundamentally, the reason why many people feel that middle age is rather dreary. It is because so many of the finest spirits died when they were young; so often that it has become a proverb to say "Those whom the gods love die young." Our Lord himself, who might have been thirty-three—who could not, I believe, have been more than thirty-five or thirty-six—when he died, gives to those who love him an example and an inspiration at so many points of life, that to find that one cannot get from him the kind of guidance that one would desire at middle age makes us feel that it is better to be swept out of life before the process of growing old and losing the glamour and the glory of existence comes upon us.

What is middle age? When do we begin to be middle-aged? For myself I can say that up to my present year I have found every year of my life more exciting than the year before, and the idea that there is something dreary and dull about middle age—*necessarily* dreary and dull—seems to me fundamentally mistaken.

After all, when we reach the watershed of life, which divides the growing up from the descent, we ought to have learned a great deal about ourselves. It has been said that a man of forty who is not able to act as his own doctor must be a fool. I do not think that is altogether true, but there is something in it. He ought to know by that time, more or less, what physically agrees with him, what he can eat without having indigestion, and how much he can eat, what holidays he needs, and so on. And forty is hardly middle-aged. Surely, then, by the time we are approaching fifty we ought to know something about our own personality! We ought to know, roughly speaking, what kind of people we are.

Now one of the most harassing things about youth is our complete uncertainty as to what kind of a person we are. Whether one is very remarkable, extraordinarily good, or very commonplace, or very bad is all uncertain. Personally I never could be at all certain, and I believe I generally hoped that I was the kind of person that I had just read about in some book—if it was an attractive person, a great saint, or a great adventurer, or somebody who had excelled in some rôle of life! Or perhaps somebody whose life was one long act of self-sacrifice of which nobody would ever know until after I was dead. It was most harassing, this uncertainty, because although there is a certain natural conceit in

young people (it *is* natural, and nobody ought to be irritated by it) there is also a recurring sense of inferiority. Are your opinions yours, or have you simply accepted them from somebody else? Have your most cherished convictions been thrust upon you by somebody you specially admire, or by the circle in which you grew up, or by the tradition that was in your family? Those ideals in which you believe, are they really utterly foolish and unreal? Are they opinions which only very young and ignorant people could hold, or is there some truth in them? Perhaps before the world we put up a bluff of being absolutely certain—more certain than anyone ever could be!—and yet how often there comes into our minds a fear that perhaps we are only an empty shell with nothing really our own in it at all, and that neither our ideals, nor our principles, nor our convictions, nor even the virtues that the world ascribes to us, are really ours.

What kind of people are we going to be? We make false starts, try to be all sorts of different people, and then find we cannot. We are not that sort of person at all, and there comes to us a terrible sense of failure. Life seems so short when one is very young. I can remember feeling that twenty-two (the august age to which one of my friends had attained) was *very* old, and that it really could not matter what happened to anyone after he was thirty. When one is young, how

short life is, and how urgent it is that one should know the sort of person he wants to be and whether he has the capacity to be that person.

When we are middle-aged, there is one great factor in our favour. We either know what sort of person we are, or at least we have the materials for knowing. Perhaps some day psychology will have reached a point of wisdom at which it will be able to help us while we are much, much younger, to guide our lives and to know the aim that we ought to set before us; for if there is one lesson that life teaches more than another I think it is this—that we must try to be the very best kind of person *of the kind that we are*, but that it is fatal to try to be some other kind. That lesson psychology is teaching us to-day—that we must be ourselves, we must devote ourselves to being the very best that is in us, we must carry the powers we have to their highest point; but we must not waste our time and strength in trying to be some other kind of person altogether.

If, then, by the time you are middle-aged, you know what sort of person you are, how much more direct, how much more smooth, how much more sure your path can be in the future! Instead of wasting your strength in a vain effort to be somebody quite different from any person that is implicit in you at all, you know now the sort of person that you are. You do not know

at all how greatly you may be that person. You do not know that, even when you are middle-aged. You do not know how far you may go along that path; but you do know what path it is. I am not speaking of one's career. Sometimes that changes, even in middle age. But your temperament, your character, your *psyche*, you know that by now. Or if some of you do not yet know what kind of person you are, you have at least got the materials for knowing. You have lived—how long? Let us say fifty years.

In fifty years you have made enough mistakes and achieved enough successes and followed your path in life sufficiently, with all your false starts, to know, if you choose, what kind of person you are, and while psychology is still in its present rather inchoate condition, that is something that we may be thankful for. Take stock of yourself. If you are discouraged, if you feel that middle age is rather dreary, if you would like to go back even to those false starts, since, after all they meant the possibility of a start, take stock of yourself. Why did you make all those mistakes? What are the obstacles that you were or are up against? Are they outside you, or are they within you? Have you chosen wrong? Is it possible for you to choose again? If it is not, what can you make of life where you are? You have all the material; the young have not. They *have* to make their adventures and take their risks,

because all their experience is before them; but you have got that experience. Set it down, even, if you like, on paper: the things you have succeeded in, the things you have failed in, the things you might have done once, and did not, and why you did not. Think in a dispassionate and cold-blooded way. Consider where you stand, and if you do that faithfully, honestly, sincerely, you will be in a position to move with much greater certainty, to be a much more steady and poised and efficient person, than you could while you were making shots in the dark, as you had to do when you were young. There will come into your life the sense of effectiveness, the sense of knowing what you are about and where you are going; and the fret and fever, the heartbreaking sense of failure which pursued you when you were making one false start after another, will pass away. I asked myself this morning, as honestly as I could, would I go back now to be young again if I could? If I could be twenty again, would I? For a moment I thought, "Yes, I would, if I could," and then I asked myself why, and do you know what the reason was? It was because I was imagining myself going back to twenty with all the knowledge of myself that I have at forty-seven. I figured to myself that I would not waste my time again trying to be something quite other than anything I ever could be. I imagined myself going back to be twenty

with all that I have gained in the process of years. I wanted to go back and avoid all the mistakes I have made, and all the time that I have wasted, with the knowledge of myself that middle age has given to me. Well, anyone would like to do that, because all of us have made mistakes we wish we had not made, and lost opportunities we wish we had not lost; and if anyone were to say, Go back now, and avoid all those errors, who that has any penitence in him at all would not say, "Thank God. I will go and no more make these mistakes." But when I asked myself, would you go back and be twenty *as you were at twenty?* Would you do that? No, indeed I would not. Why should I go again through all those blunders and stupidities, through all that fret and anxiety, and lose what I have learned?

To-day I have instead the knowledge which comes with middle age, and which gives a thrill to the middle-aged. I realise that at this point of life, standing, so to speak, on the watershed of life, death becomes real in a sense that it cannot be real to the young. The young do not really expect to die, no, not when the chances of death are all round them. When men go into battle, ninety-nine out of a hundred expect that they will come out safe. They go into it, perhaps, with terror in their hearts, brave as they are. They know that they may be struck. And yet there is an invincible conviction in the minds of

most that they will not—that they are of those who will come out safe. But when we come to middle age, there comes suddenly a thrilling sense of the reality of death. It is not any longer a mere fact of common knowledge that we must die: it is a reality. We shall die and go on to some other life, and all that we do here and now has a significance there. What we are now, and what we make of the rest of our lives is part of our schooling for the life hereafter. Everything we do and say and think counts for that. Do you think your education at school and college for life in this world, with all its mystery, is half as wonderful as the education of life itself for death? How little the young know of life! How full of romance and mystery and wonder it is! Yes, but they know more about the life here than you and I know about life hereafter.

This consciousness comes, I think, with a sudden reality, when we reach the middle of our life and perhaps reckon with ourselves, "I have lived now longer than I have yet, in the normal way, to live." When death becomes a reality to us so, it brings a sense of wonder, a background of infinity into this life, which makes the idea of middle age being dreary or dull impossible.

I never felt life half so romantic as I did the first time I realised—not *knew*, for we all know it—but *realised*—that I should have to die, and that this life on earth is just a stage.

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar."

And, coming from afar, we pause on this earth for awhile, and go on. That is what makes life so significant. What would life matter, after all, if this were all? The significance and the wonder and the romance of life is in its preparation for another and yet greater adventure. Sir James Barrie, who has said more true and wonderful things than any man of his generation, never said anything more wonderful and true than when he said, "To die will be an awfully great adventure." The radiance of that adventure shines on us when we begin to realise the significance of our lives as an episode here, in some infinite hereafter.

So it matters tremendously when you are middle-aged and have made many mistakes, and are even, perhaps, in the wrong way altogether, that you should set to work here and now to use the rest of your life, not as though life were dreary and dull, but as an episode in a great journey, whose end is God.

Set to work and discipline yourself. One of the dreadful things about being middle-aged is that other people do not discipline us in the way they used to when we were young. We can always have the most comfortable chair in the

room. Nobody will tell us that we are eating too much, or that we are eating the wrong things! I once knew an elderly lady who had so delicate a digestion that she could not eat bread: she could only eat hot scones! We used to say to one another that she was silly and greedy, but do you think we ever said that to her face? If I had eaten hot scones at twenty and said I could not digest bread, I should have been told the truth about myself. But we can let ourselves go when we are middle-aged, because there are very few people in a position to pull us up. That is perhaps even more true of men than it is of women. They are "the head of the family," and how many of your families, gentlemen, are going to discipline you? If the children do, you think they are merely impertinent. If the wife does, she has to do it so exquisitely carefully, that it is not really as good discipline as it ought to be. Remember therefore that you can pull up the young people, or you can at least make them know that they are not exactly the ideal people in the home they might be; but how about you? How easy it is now to escape the discipline of life in little things! I do not mean the great big things that overwhelm us all sometimes, but those little things which, properly treated, make us strong enough to deal with the big things.

Really, most of us eat too much. That sounds a mundane thing to say from a pulpit, but it is

not unimportant. When Dr. Julia Seaton urged us to fast, she said it was especially good for those who were middle-aged, and quoted a certain saying of our Lord's:—

"Shall the children of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them" or the young fast while life is full and vigorous and strong and splendid? The time will come when they will lose that. "Then shall they fast in those days."

We middle-aged people have ceased to grow physically. We shall not grow any more. Life is not demanding much of us in that sense. We should not clog our bodies by giving them what they do not need. Deny yourself, discipline yourself. It is a very ancient rule of the great religions of the world, that people should fast sometimes. It is not for nothing that they develop that discipline. In middle age especially, we should advance to a new and heroic mastery over our bodies.

Discipline yourself intellectually. It is not too late to learn. Learning can be made a habit, and the longer you keep it up, the younger you will be in spirit. Do not say it is too late for you to learn. Try to see whether you are not cleverer than you thought! If you will feed your mind (which goes on developing after the demands of the body have ceased) it will go on growing. It is at the point at which you say—or find your-

self inclined to say—"it is too late for me to learn this and that and the other" that you begin to grow old. Youth is full of curiosity and desire to learn, but by degrees we find that learning is difficult, and involves a good deal of energy and trouble. We begin to dread "the pain of a new idea" and the old ideas seem quite good enough. So at middle age we are inclined to believe that it is too late. It is too late at that exact moment when you are resigned to its being too late! For not to be able to change is to begin to die, and as long as you can change, as long as your mind can grow and your intellect take things in, your spirit is still young; and being young, it keeps all the rest of you young.

Then, because you know who you are and what you are, what your line in life is, you need not be in a state of anxiety and haste. A certain peace of mind should come to you, a certain sense of balance, and serenity. Take time, even if you have to take it by violence. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Take time to be quiet. It is not displeasing, it is not offensive, for the young to be in a hurry. Perhaps they ought to cultivate quietness, but it is natural for them to be in haste. They have so much to do, so much to understand, so much to know. But there is something repellent about the middle age that has no serenity and no poise, that is always racketing about mentally,

that has no peace in its heart. After all, you have got away, or should have got away, from that fever and fret—in return for what? Not just vacancy, not just dulness, but peace. The peace which the world cannot give, but which you must take, have time to take, and keep your mind at rest.

In that silence which is far, far more necessary to you than to the young, you will know yourself better, and you will know others also, and knowing them you will believe in them, for this certainly life has taught us, that every human being has capacities for goodness, and even for greatness, and that cynicism and disappointment and disillusion are simply the opinion of the egotist against all the history of humanity. The blows that have fallen upon you, the ideals that you found it so difficult to believe in, the disillusionment that sets in for you, the disappointments in other human beings, these things are your experience. Look abroad, and see whether it is not a fact that it is goodness and love and brotherliness and friendship, and essential decency that holds the world together. What do those people mean who tell us that human nature is so evil? Are they really so ignorant as to suppose that if the world were more evil than good it could hold together at all? The evidence of their own experience should at least include this great fact, that only good things can cohere, that only good-

ness binds and creates and holds together, and that therefore if the world holds together at all, it is because there is more good in it than bad. These ideals that you find it so difficult to hold—why do you find it difficult? Because of your personal disappointment? Because people have disappointed you? Because they have misjudged you and treated you unkindly and been ungrateful for the things you did for them? Don't you realise if you look at yourself, how much it is your fault? Those things that hurt most savagely when we are young will not hurt so much when we are older, and not because we have grown cynical and think it does not matter, but because we have begun to understand why these things happen.

Why do people seem ungrateful? I will tell you. Almost always it is because they have not understood what you have tried to do for them. When people do understand, their gratitude is almost pathetic. Some little tiny thing that costs you nothing will bring you a world of gratitude, because the person for whom you did it understood the thing you did. The thing which does not bring you gratitude, either you have done badly, and therefore did not deserve thanks, or else the ungrateful person does not understand. Have *you* always understood? Have you not a thousand times received benefits and not had the faintest notion what they cost to

other people? If you are such a good, kind, decent person and can in your own conscience count a thousand times when you were ungrateful, and yet you know you were trying to behave decently, why should you be so bitter against others? Perhaps they are trying to behave decently, just as hard as you are, when they misjudge you. Do you never misjudge them? How can you possibly judge anyone without knowing them? And you do not know anyone perfectly, not anyone at all, and yet you utter a judgment every time you open your lips. Do you remember that moving passage in one of George Eliot's novels, in which she says, "Perhaps at the very moment that you are criticising someone for his failure, he is suffering an agony of regret for the thing he did wrong." You would not misjudge him—you would not judge him at all, if you knew that. While the world judges you, why need you be cynical about it? After all, would you like people to know everything about you? They cannot be perfectly just unless they do. Do you want them to? You know you do not. There is not one of us that has not got some reserves that only God can know. Well, then, why should you be discouraged or cynical, or think evil of the world because people do not judge you quite wisely and are not always as grateful as you think they should be?

Middle age should bring a deep kindliness of

view, and a deeper understanding of oneself and a deeper understanding of other people. Listen, be silent, pray; because your time is shorter than it was twenty years ago, it is all the more necessary that you should direct it rightly now. Life and death are to you greater adventures than when you were young. You had more time then to make your mistakes. Now you have less time, more knowledge. Go directly on your path, and remember that death is not the end. It is only the beginning of something else.

Does not that bring back to you the romance and the glory of youth? Christ, as I reminded you at the beginning, knew no middle age in our sense of the word, but his experience in that comparatively short life went so deep that we find him at the heart of all experience. He went through all the gamut of human experience, and in the end he said what we must all learn to say, "Father, into thy hands I trust my spirit." All that you are doing, learning, being, now is an education for that moment, and beyond it, into the hands of God, trust your spirit.

OLD AGE

I THINK it is very presumptuous of me to preach about growing old, because, although I have been young and now am in middle life, I do not yet know old age. But, though I am convinced that beautiful old age is a most inspiring and lovely thing, I am certain that none of us will achieve a beautiful old age unless we begin to achieve it while we are young! So it seemed to me that it would be worth while to try to say something.

If you young people are going to be beautiful old people, you must start now. For this is largely a matter of habit, and habits are things that we are forming all the time. As we grow older, our habits grow old with us, and become much more difficult to change, and if we are going to be at all inspiring or beautiful or "reverend" when we are old, we ought to begin very young.

We are creatures of habit, and when a habit has grown right into us, we begin to feel that any kind of change must be bad. I want to ask all middle-aged people, and all old ones, to realise this: that change is a sign of life. To think that

change is bad in itself (which is a very common temptation as we grow older) is a denial of life.

We must change if we are alive, and therefore, although there are bad changes as well as good changes, our attitude of mind ought to be that we do welcome change, and not that we dread it. There are bad changes, of course; but change *in itself* is a sign of life, and therefore we ought to be troubled if we are not changing; and when old people say that the younger generation is very mad and very bad, just because it is different from the older generation, should they not realise that change is part of life, and therefore the younger generation *must* be different from the older one? It is at least possible that the changes that we notice as we grow old are changes for the better, and not changes for the worse. When therefore we find ourselves inclined to say that it is really dreadful that the younger generation should do this, or that, or the other, let us ask ourselves before we say it—even as we feel the words forming on our lips—whether it really is dreadful, or whether it is not something which may possibly be better than what our own generation did. There is no subject, for example, on which every generation waxes more eloquent than the way in which young people, young girls especially, dress, and people complain of this generation as of others; yet I am confident that reasonable people, if they stopped to think, would

see that women's dress has never been more beautiful, more dignified, or more rational than it is in the present generation. I am delighted to find that Sir George Newman tells us that the lower death-rate and the improved health of this generation is largely due to the way in which women dress! Let me read what he says:

"More reasonable dress, the disappearance of tight clothing and trailing skirts, a far larger amount of outdoor exercise, more active amusements and athletics, and open-air life, have brought an immense improvement in the personal health of men and women, an improvement which has almost abolished a form of anæmia previously common, and has materially affected the whole standard of their health."

Well, that is only one, and perhaps you will think a frivolous example, but there is no complaint more common than for each generation in turn to say that the younger generation dresses in a manner ugly, indecent, and intolerable, whereas if we stop to look we shall see that—if for safety's sake, I press my case a little beyond any generation that can possibly be present to-night!—the race whose women once wore crinolines and now dress as they do is certainly going forward.

Take a more serious instance. The other day a friend of mine (who is young enough to know better) expressed horror at the terrible increase

of vulgar curiosity which caused a certain bungalow where a terrible murder had been committed, to be opened as an exhibition to the public. Now just stop and think. It is only a very short time, as history goes, since, not the bungalow where the crime was committed, but the murderer being put to death was a public exhibition, which people went in crowds to see and also took their children to see. Nothing in the world prevented that from going on but public opinion. Undoubtedly there are people to-day who, if such a terrible thing could be seen, would go and see it. Nevertheless, it is the opinion of the mass of the people that has put a stop to the exhibition of the dying agonies of a man executed by process of law. There is not an "increase in vulgar curiosity"; there is a decrease. And if you will only consider, you will see again and again that those things which strike you with pain and horror in the present generation strike you with pain and horror precisely because public opinion is now so much more sensitive, so much more humane, than it was; that a thing which would have passed without notice a little while ago, to-day seems to us terrible. It is an increased sensitiveness, a higher public opinion, that makes us sensitive to these things.

Look wider. Look further. You will see that that increased sensitiveness is a sign of the improvement of public opinion, and that indeed

very often the things which we deplore as signs of degeneracy in the younger generation really show it on the upgrade and not on the down.

May I suggest that that idea should be welcome to anyone who has a decent humanity? If there is one thing that does seem sometimes rather terrible in old age, it is not so much that they believe we are going to the dogs, but that some of them seem to take a distinct pleasure in the belief! They delight to think how much better their generation was, and in a sense, although they shake their heads over it and deplore it, they seem positively to enjoy the spectacle of the world going to the dogs.

Oh, older brothers and sisters, do you not see that when you bring an indictment against the younger generation, you are bringing a far more serious indictment against yourselves? For we were once in your hands. You are our parents. You were our teachers. Our heredity is handed on to us from you, and our environment in those years when we were most susceptible was in your hands. Educationists say that the first seven years of a child's life are those in which his character is moulded. Psychologists tell us that before the child is born into the world its temperament is being affected, and its destiny perhaps decided. Those years of early infancy, those months before the child was born into the world, were in your hands, and although I do not for an

instant absolve anyone from his personal responsibility, yet I must think that to bring an indictment against the younger generation is always, if the older one would realise it, to bring a far more terrible indictment against the older one. What have you done to us that we have not done better? What start did you give us that we are not able to make a better thing of life than this? You should desire, should you not, both for our sakes and your own, that we go further than you did? It is a short-sighted egotism which makes an old man glad when the work to which he has set his hand goes to pieces when he leaves it. It is a poor kind of pride that delights in the thought that the others cannot get on without him, that when he leaves everything is ruined! Surely it is a greater tribute to you to know that the younger generation profits by the start you gave them. If they do not go further than you went, what was the matter with you that you gave them so ill a start? Let us admit that it is, at first, hard to see the work that you started, that you created, that you built up, falling into the hands of others who will, perhaps, do it better than you could. So the old sometimes hold on to power with a passionate, a desperate grasp. They cannot let it go because they cannot bear to know that others will take it up and use it better than they did. Surely that is an ignoble feeling, though perhaps it sometimes attacks us all. We

should realise that our true greatness can be measured by the extent to which the others whom we started, perhaps our children, our employés, our friends, our disciples, can surpass us—the distance by which they can go beyond. A generous old age takes a disinterested and beautiful pride in the fact that the world does go forward. Perhaps you have a right to think that you gave the world a little push forward. You helped it in the right direction. But then that terrible desire to hold on to things, which so withers and cramps them, came to you. How can we conquer it? we must not, I think, ever let ourselves take a short-sighted or a personal view, but must, as life goes on, seek for an ever wider and wider vision and realise that in proportion as our work was well done, it will grow beyond us.

Again, we must beware of our own habits. The older we get, the fewer people there are to tell us that our habits are odious, and that we really must break them! Therefore we must tell it to ourselves. Very often the reason why older people are not welcomed by the younger (if they are not welcome) is not for any very great or glaring fault of character. It is simply that their habits have become idols, so that they want everything to be exactly "just so." Young people can be overridden. We can tell them not to make a fuss; that it does not matter a bit whether their egg is boiled for four minutes or

four and a half! But as we grow older, we gradually allow ourselves to feel that these things are very important and that—for us at least—they must be just so. When you begin to feel like that, pull yourself up. If you like your egg boiled for three and a half minutes, boil it for five for once, and see how you get on. You will find either that it really does not matter and you can eat your egg just as well, or that you can go without it, and the world does not stop. Let us acquire the habit of realising that no habit matters very much! Let us train ourselves to hold things lightly and not to hang on to individual habits though they have become like a sort of shell in which we live. This it is to be young in spirit; and to feel that every little thing—how we live, and how we work, and how we sleep, and what we eat, and so on—matters tremendously, this it is to grow old. We should have grown, as we grow older, beyond that. It is natural for young people to think that small things matter very much, because they have not yet learnt to see beyond them. Each little thing in turn is so important. A child cannot see beyond the disappointment of a wet day when it was going for a picnic, because it has not learnt yet to see further than that one day. There are people, like children, whose whole day is blighted if they have to go and see the dentist. A little experience of life should help us to realise that the moment will

infallibly arrive when we shall leave the dentist's chair, and regain that rapturous feeling with which we go out.

For old people not to have got beyond a momentary discomfort or a disturbance of personal habits is melancholy, is it not? And it is, believe me, very often the reason why young people find the company of old people burdensome. It is not age that makes it so. It is not age: it is insistence on all manner of little things that do not really matter. The habit of looking beyond the troubles and inconveniences of the day can be cultivated.

Some people have written to me on this subject of old age, that what chiefly distresses them is the feeling of depression and discouragement that comes, and that is perhaps inevitable, because physically their powers are running down. Believe me, the young often feel depressed. This is not a matter of age. There is no despair so great as the despair of youth. It is a darkness that overwhelms the young because they cannot yet see beyond their own failures and their own mistakes. Speaking from my own experience among old and young, I would say that the sense of utter discouragement, the feeling that you cannot make any impression on the world, cannot get the work you want or, when you have it, are sure to make a failure of it, is far more black and far more overwhelming with the young than it is

with the old. We are all depressed sometimes, and there is a certain gallantry in putting that depression away where people cannot see it. But that is a discipline that life ought to make easier to us, and not harder.

Above all, do not be afraid. Depression that comes from fear is very hard to bear. Perhaps those who worked hardest when they were young, and cared most, and achieved most, are most open in middle and old age to that kind of fear which comes with the sense that the things you fought for and won, perhaps with blood and sweat, are vanishing or losing their value. The beliefs which you had such a hard intellectual battle to achieve—are they now vanishing in a newer light? Perhaps a delusive light? You won, shall I say, your Christian faith, those of you who are Christians. You won it in the teeth of such difficulties! You had such a hard fight! And now the younger generation comes along, and all the things for which you fought so hard seem to them of no importance. Something came along—as, in an older generation, science came along—to revolutionise our ideas about the world, and you fought your way through that. You reached, you thought, a steady place to stand on, and now the world goes on, and the world's thought, and that steady place seems to shake under you. You had a hard fight, perhaps, about your attitude towards the Bible. You won through to some-

thing, some place—I do not know what it is for each of you. Then there arises some newer school of thought and the very field of battle is changed, and the old cries are silent, and the things that cost you so much are nothing to the younger generation. The battle has swept on, and you who were in the van are now lingering in the rear, and you ask yourself what use was all the struggle and the cost. Is nothing stable? Is nothing sure?

"We watch," Mrs. Creighton writes, "sometimes with almost trembling dread, the passing away of the old ideas that we have trusted, the coming of strange ways of thought, the sweeping away of familiar landmarks, the crude ugliness ofttimes of change to-day." How true that is! To-day, perhaps, many are feeling about psychology just what a previous generation felt about what is called "natural science." It seems to be digging away at the very roots of their religion—that religion for which they had to fight so hard—and the very change of the battle-ground is a hardship for those who fought on the old fields. The very heroism with which they fought made the victory precious to them, and to find now that a new battle is raging in some other place, while the things which were to you the very rock on which you stood seem to be disappearing in a kind of mist, makes you afraid.

Well, but it need not! You fought through to

that point. Do you want the world to stop there? You who were a fighter, do you want the younger generation to have no fight? In your heart you must desire this thing that on the surface of your mind you are afraid of The first fear that perhaps you are too old to change, too tired to dream of fresh ideals in a world so changed, strikes chill. But it would be more terrible still if there were no change. From the point that you won the next generation starts, and if you fought the battle there and found God with you all the time, need you be afraid because these younger ones will fight the battle further on and find God with them all the time?

Look for a moment at the tragic harm, the terrible disaster, it has been to religion that, in the generation to which natural science came as a great revelation, theologians fought against it, and religious people were frightened of it. We can all see now what a disaster it was. We are, theologically, two generations behind scientific thought, because of that fear.

Well, now, if the younger generation advances to meet a fresh battle, and to engage in a fresh struggle for its ideals and its faith, we shall wish them God-speed. Would it not be a disaster if there were no fresh issue before humanity, no great field for achievement? You need not be anxious. You have lived a long life, and all through it you have seen that God was greater

than any human thought and transcendent above all human fear. Why should you be afraid? Follow the battle in your thoughts. Take your courage, you who have proved your courage, and know it, and can rely on it, take it with you and see whether you also cannot even now play some part in the great battle. Mrs. Creighton in this same little pamphlet on old age, speaks of a very distinguished theologian, Dr. Salmon, who in the very last years of his life—and he lived to a very great age—was working at an important book on the Synoptic Gospels. If we are always learning and never allow our minds to harden, that may be possible to us also. And if a man, whose whole life has been given to theological discussion, should in old age have the courage to advance at the end to a fresh discussion and a fresh battle, is it not magnificent?

There is an old age that inspires and delights. It will go on, this world of ours, for the Holy Spirit is leading it on, and that you should have been a fighter should make you sympathise with those who are fighting now. Learn to hold loosely all that is not eternal. Perhaps these victories over our intellectual habits and over our physical habits is God's gentle way of training us for immortality. He is teaching us to hold lightly the things that belong to the body, yes, and even to the mind, because the time comes when we shall "pass through" these "things temporal to things

eternal." Our fear of that is largely a fear of the unknown, is it not? It is because we do not know—we cannot imagine—how it will be to be without this flesh-and-blood body which has accompanied us through all our life on earth. But if your mind is being trained by God as the years pass, to hold things lightly, to fix itself on things eternal, and to realise that the temporal things are very passing, will not death itself be less terrible as the idea of the eternal becomes more familiar to the spirit? Old age itself is like a summer holiday before the "higher education" to which we are going on, and should seem in all its beauty like that holiday.

Let us begin now to make a habit of remembering that this life is only an episode in our immortality, and old age the holiday which we take when we are tired. When the loveliest holiday of the year, the summer holiday, comes round, you do not feel, as you go off to it, "Now I am letting go of everything. This is the end." You enjoy your holiday, you delight in it, partly because you are tired and want a rest, but more because you know that when you are rested you can return to work and do it better. So is it with old age: you are going on to something else. You have some higher adventure, some greater life, some nobler education waiting for you on the other side. Is it not natural then to rest first, and, as Browning says, sum up your gains—yes,

and your losses too—and look at them calmly and serenely,

"Fearless and unperplexed,
When you wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue."

It is possible to think of old age as that time of rest and meditation and silence, and even of *aloneness;* I will not say *loneliness*, for such an old age is not lonely, although it may be alone. Many of those who were your friends, who, thank God, still are your friends, have passed over before you. The longer you live the fewer you will have on this side, and the more on the other. That also is lovely; but perhaps, here and now, you feel it leaves you alone. Why, no, it leaves you time to be more with God, and there again we must begin young, for unless we grow into the habit of being silent sometimes with God and going away, perhaps, from all our friends and acquaintances to be alone with God, we do not easily acquire that habit in old age. If we begin while we are young, or middle-aged, the desire to be alone with God will grow upon us, and old age, though in a sense it must be isolated, can never then be lonely.

Do not then desire to "die in harness." How often I have heard people say that: "How splendid to die in harness! To be cut off in the midst of one's work!" Do not desire it. It is a poor,

cowardly desire. Desire to see the whole of life, to have time to consider, to wait, to judge. To miss old age is to miss something natural, beautiful and right. Are you so poor in thought, are you so unaccustomed to silence and to God that you must die in the height of your work, in all the racket of public business, in all the crowd and press of middle age? Do you not ever feel, you middle-aged ones, that you would like leisure, and loneliness even, for awhile? Do you not feel it? Do you want to die with your mind in such a racket that you have had no time to think? Well, perhaps our minds should never be so; and yet it is difficult for them not to be so when the world presses on one at every turn, and considerations of family, of friends, of work, and so on are so clamorous. But if you have the capacity for friendship with God, surely you must sometimes look forward to that time of peace when the world will not claim so much of your time and thought and energy, when you will have time to think, and to be silent, and to listen to the voice of God.

If that old age is possible to you, it is an old age which will be an inspiration and a glory to your children and your younger friends. The young are generous. They are prone to hero-worship. They easily make idols of those who are noble and good, and though it would not be natural or right for the young always to desire

the society of the old, there are old people whom they instinctively desire sometimes to be with. Surely we have all known some such—some old man or woman—whose spirit was so youthful, and whose charm so great, through their wisdom, their gentleness, their tolerance, their interest in the world's progress, that it was a delight to be with them. Perhaps the real bitterness of old age is the fear of being useless, the feeling that you are no longer any use in the world: but can these feel they are no use? There is no inspiration so glorious as a beautiful old age. That you should be able to keep your ideals through all the fever and fret of life, and still hold them, and believe in them, and send us out with them on a great quest, that is glorious! Our ideals, the ideals of the middle-aged and the ideals of the young, are cheap compared with yours. The young have not yet fought for them. They have not bled for them. They do not know yet whether they really believe in them. They cannot know—none of us can know till we have put it to the proof, how much of our idealism is true, how much based on the rock. But if you can still be sure of God, if you can still believe in man, if your ideals are still rooted firm through all the tempest, what an inspiration are you to the younger generation! You give us faith; you give us confidence; you give us courage, because we see in you a faith that has borne the heat and

stress of the day, and at the end is stronger than at the beginning. You have fought the good fight. You have carried through and carried on until the end. And in the world there is no greater service than this. You pass now from things temporal to things eternal, and your passing becomes the oriflamme to those who follow.

There is a passage at the end of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," where he describes the land of Beulah, which is old age, where the pilgrims rest awhile before they cross the river of death.

"This river," he says, "has been a terror to many; yea, the thoughts of it, also, have often frightened me: but now, methinks, I stand easy; my foot is fixed upon that on which the feet of the priests that bare the ark of the covenant stood while Israel went over this Jordan. The waters, indeed, are to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold, yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the convoy that wait for me on the other side, lie as a glowing coal at my heart."

Then there comes that wonderful description of the soul crossing the river of death.

"Then," said he, "I am going to my Father's; and though with great difficulty I have got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the troubles I have been at to arrive where I am. . . ." When the day that he must go hence was come, many accom-

panied him to the riverside, into which as he went he said, "Death, where is thy sting?" And as he went down deeper, he said, "Grave, where is thy victory?" So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

ON BEING SORRY FOR ONESELF

A FEW years ago a great London doctor was walking through one of the mean streets of a poor part of London, when he noticed in a window an announcement of an exhibition where there was to be seen for the price of a shilling an extraordinarily deformed and terrible human being. He was called "the Elephant Man," and Sir Frederick Treves, having a moment's leisure, paid his shilling and went in.

He has told us the story of what he saw and what followed in a book which I for one have not got the courage to read. One's mind sickens at the thought of what life must have meant to that man. But I read, as perhaps many of you did, a review of the book, and the reviewer briefly tells the story. He tells how Sir Frederick Treves went into the shop and was conducted to a room with a curtain hanging across it. The curtain was drawn by the exploiter of this unhappy human curiosity, and Sir Frederick Treves saw behind it a shapeless form, crouching under a kind of loose cover. His exploiter ordered him to get up and show himself, and he stood up and

dropped his covering. Sir Frederick Treves then saw a man so hideously deformed that the reviewer, having embarked on a descriptive quotation, suddenly breaks off and says, "Let us leave it at that."

Sir Frederick Treves did not know what to do or how to help, but on the impulse of the moment, gave his card to the Elephant Man and left him, telling him if he ever wanted him, to send for him. Then he went away, and, I suppose, for a while forgot about it.

It appears, however, that shortly afterwards, the police put a stop to the exhibition, and the exhibitionist took his unhappy prey to Belgium and exhibited him again there; but almost at once the police again stepped in, and he was forbidden to continue the exhibition. Coming to the conclusion that no money was to be made any more out of the Elephant Man, he seems to have put him on board ship for England with a ticket for London. As the reviewer says, one hesitates to imagine what that journey could have been like, but the man somehow got to London. There his courage failed him altogether and he tried to hide himself in the station. He was found by some of the officials, and they discovered Sir Frederick Treves' card still on him and rang him up to ask if he knew anything about the man.

Sir Frederick came down to the station and took that man home to his house, and there he

lived for the few years that he had left—I think, if I remember rightly, that he died at the age of 26. During the last two or three years of his life, while he was living in Sir Frederick Treves' house, he had a room to himself; he was never seen by any human being unless he actually desired it; and he had an hour or so in the evening when he could go into the garden under Sir Frederick's absolute promise that no one else would be there. Queen Alexandra (who surely will have an extra star in her crown some day for this!) once—no, not once, but several times—went and sat with him and took his hand. She gave the man her photograph; he put it on the mantelpiece and, as Sir Frederick tells us, he practically worshipped it. And during those last two or three years he said more than once that he was "happy every hour of the day." *Happy!*

He was a man, Sir Frederick tells us, of a sensitive nature, of intelligence above the average. You would not have wondered, would you—indeed, you would almost have expected—that a man's spirit, enclosed in such a prison, would become as deformed as his body; would be poisoned with hatred against a world which had been to him hell. But it was not so. *He was happy every hour of the day.* And he had nothing, absolutely nothing, of the things that make us happy. No work, no gift with which he could

serve the world, no sense that he was of value to anyone, no wife, no child, no equality in friendship, no sense that he could give anything to anybody; just an absence of torture. And he was happy—"happy every hour of the day." Is there not something sublime in the human spirit that could remain serene and gentle under so terrible a fate? Go through such a hell of torment unembittered? Be willing to be happy when active torment ceased, and bear—it seems—no angry resentment, no venomous or sullen hate for what was past? I wish he could know—perhaps he does know—that to those who have not even perhaps read the book but have just heard of him, there is a fragrance in the memory of that touching capacity and willingness to be happy, which might almost make him think his life had been worth living.

And some of *us* are sorry for ourselves!

Well, you may say, his suffering does not make it any easier for us to suffer! His was a fate, indeed, beyond imagination for terror and pity, but after all that does not make it any easier for us! Perhaps, in a way, the very sensitiveness that makes us feel for such agony only makes the world seem a more terrible place. That he suffered more than we do ought not to make it easier to suffer: it only makes it the more terrible to live in a world that contains such agony. If we are disappointed, or ill, or out of work, or unsuc-

cessful, or unloved, the fact that this man had worse things to bear does not really make our load any lighter.

No, it does not. I do not want to pretend that it does. I know that, on the contrary, to a sensitive soul, it often makes the world seem more horrible still that such a depth of suffering should be endured in it. But the point I want to make is this. This man had nothing; so far as we can see, absolutely nothing. Only the memory of unspeakable torture. Yet he was happy. If, therefore, he could be happy in such a case, to be sorry for ourselves is not inevitable. It is not due to outward circumstance. It is a vice of the mind. It is an ignoble temper. It is a mean cowardice in the face of pain. It cannot be our circumstances that make us sorry for ourselves, if it is possible for such a being as this man ever to be happy.

If you think of the people who are sorry for themselves—perhaps if you are honest you will see that that class occasionally includes you!—if you think of the people who are sorry for themselves, are they not just as often people who have much to make them happy, as people who have, as this man, everything to make them sad?

I do not know a person who is more sorry for himself when he is a little bit ill than a person who has always been well. Let a person have practically perfect health, and the resentment

that he feels when he has a cold or a fit of indigestion, would cause you to think that all his life had been one long agony of disease. But that, too, is not invariable. You will sometimes come across the person who is very strong and well as a rule, and who will cheerfully say, when he is ill, "Well, after all I have had an extraordinarily good time hitherto. I have been most fortunate. I have no cause to complain."

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves," that we are thus or thus.

You know people who have some slight disappointment, some little failure, some crumpled rose-leaf. What an uproar they make about it! It blots out the sun for them; it blackens the sky. They have been so accustomed to prosperity that they do not know how to tolerate the injury and the injustice of having occasionally to suffer like other people. On the other hand, you know people who have indeed been buffeted by the world, who are most buffeted and most gay in spirit.

Some of you here will still remember Miss Lisette Caldecott, a member of this congregation since we began at Kensington Town Hall. She died a little while ago. She was very badly off; she lived alone; she was terribly lame; she suffered from an affection of the bones which crippled her hands and every movement, as well as her legs and feet. Her chief joy in life was to play the

piano, and her hands became gradually so crippled that she could not play. Her other joy was to sketch, and she gradually became so blind that that went also. She was deaf. I hardly know, in my experience, of a more tormented human body; and I never found her sorry for herself. She looked forward to such trifling little pleasures with a spirit and gaiety which were full of charm. One by one, all the things that she cared for were taken from her, but her spirit was as dauntlessly gay as when she had them all. That a member or two of our congregation—some of the younger ones in the Auxiliary Choir—used to take her to her omnibus, and meet her when she came here, was to her the most heavenly piece of kindliness. She had everything to complain of, and she never complained. She never gave you the impression that she was with a heroic courage suppressing her complaints. Not a bit! She gave you the impression that she really enjoyed her life. She did enjoy it.

Of course, you know people who suffer as she did and who are exceedingly sorry for themselves. Some of those who are sorry for themselves have, in a sense, every right to be so. But the thing that has struck me, who hears, perhaps, rather a lot about people's griefs, is that this habit of being sorry for oneself does not seem to have any connection whatever with circumstances. You will find it in people who have every reason to com-

plain: you will find it in people who have none: and because it is so independent of actual circumstances, I am forced to the conclusion that it is not due to circumstances: it is a vice in the mind itself.

Indeed, it *is* a vice, and rather a bad one. It means that you are focussing your thoughts upon yourself. If you were to turn your mind outward you would see people who are gay and gallant in the face of misfortunes which, set down in cold blood, make an apparently overwhelming list; people with such a dauntless spirit that to the end they will be gay; people who have neither health nor influence nor money. There is something they will always have, these gallant spirits who have apparently nothing—no success, no particular talent, no wealth, no health—and yet who will extort from life its joy, and make of life so gallant a thing that they always have friends. For to such a spirit friendship is drawn, while we, when we are sorry for ourselves, repel it. The world may have a rough and ready judgment, but it is not fond of the coward and the skulker. It is not fond of people who have a perpetual sense of their own grievances. And it is right. Fundamentally it is right, for this vice of self-pity is most demoralising, most disintegrating. Do not indulge, even for a little while, in the pleasant pastime of considering your own grievances and reflecting how odious

everybody is to you, for to do so is to waste your strength.

You wake up in the morning, and you think, perhaps, "I won't get up for five minutes." You spend that time in considering what an odious day you are going to have. You will find that half an hour has gone like a flash in the consideration of that exquisite subject, yourself and your grievances! Half an hour is gone in a flash, and it does not leave you merely half an hour late: it leaves you demoralised and disintegrated. The psychologist who warns you against daydreams was never more right than when your dreams are of your own grievances. Such dreams result in moral disintegration; they take away your courage; they take away hope and leave you demoralised, anxious, cowardly. The world is too strong for you. Is it? Yet it was not too strong for that deformed, tormented man. The world is cruel to you. Is it a hundredth part as cruel as it was to him? Yet how swiftly his spirit reacted to the first touch of kindness! With how little resentment he brooded on the past! He put it away from him. It was the present in which he lived, because the present was kind to him; as I have known the same kind of spirit live in the future, because the future *may* be kind.

It is true that that attitude of resentment against the world repels the world. There is nothing the world loves better—and here again

it is right—than a gallant spirit, and after all, how can we know what lies behind the face of someone who takes life so gaily? How do you know? Behind any face that you see there may lie—so often there does lie—something terribly difficult, not necessarily tragic, though often it is tragic, too. But again and again when I have learnt to know someone whose outside life seemed quite smooth, quite prosperous, perhaps even specially so, I have marvelled at the precipice edge of difficulty upon which they are, in fact, walking—the nervous strain, the difficulty, the anxiety, perhaps the ill-health, the unknown suffering. You cannot tell of any of those who seem gallant and gay, how difficult their life is, how easily they might pity themselves, if they chose. I am not speaking of any one of you. I am speaking of your neighbour! It is not behind you that this tragedy lies, but perhaps behind the person who is sitting next to you! I am not speaking of myself, for a million times when I have fallen into this bog of being sorry for myself I have found the very next person I meet is someone before whose difficulties I shrink appalled, and am amazed at the courage and gaiety with which they face them. It is not that they are not sensitive. It is not that they do not suffer. As Sir Frederick Treves said of this "Elephant Man," he had a spirit sensitive beyond the average. But with that sensitiveness there is a

refusal to look inward and to brood over one's wrongs.

Who cannot find grievances if they like? It is in the spirit that the difference lies. There are no circumstances of any person in this hall which are so ghastly as those of the man with whom I began, and yet he was happy. It is therefore possible to be happy, however cruel the world has been to you. It is possible to turn your gaze outward and, at the first touch of self-pity, to turn and see how others need that pity which you are wasting upon yourself.

I could not ask Dr. Dearmer to-night to read the whole story of the Crucifixion from all the four gospels, and yet I wished I could; the story of the Crucifixion, not on Good Friday only, but from Thursday night, when our Lord was first of all betrayed with a kiss by a man whom he must have loved, since for three years, perhaps, he had been, or seemed to be, his friend. Then came the sight of all his friends leaving him in flight; then he was seized by the Roman soldiers, dragged from one court to another—from Caiaphas to Annas, to Herod, to Pontius Pilate; all through that night buffeted, beaten, insulted, spat upon; betrayed by his dearest friends, by the crowd—the crowd he had benefited and served; and then at last, in extreme physical exhaustion, carrying his cross, surrounded by those cruel, hating faces to the end.

At last his eye falls upon some who wept for him. Who could have claimed their tears more than this Jesus? "Daughters of Jerusalem, *weep not for me*, but weep for yourselves and for your children." Then a little later, they nail him to the Cross, and he says, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." Then the thief appeals to him and he says, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Then his eye falls upon his mother and his friends, and he thinks of them also. The daughters of Jerusalem—that fickle city; the executioners who torture him; the thief upon the Cross who began by deriding him; his mother and his friends—all of them had his sympathy, his understanding, his pity. Not to one does he refuse to respond. To each of them he says the one understanding thing which shows that the last person he was thinking about was himself. And he had all the sorrows of the world upon him.

Not until the last provision is made for those who loved him does our Lord speak or think of himself. "Daughters of Jerusalem, *weep not for me.*" In all the agony of suffering and grief, of physical exhaustion and apparent failure, it is still possible so deeply and truly to love others that you can find no time to pity yourself.

ON BEING A FAILURE

TO-NIGHT I am preaching about real failure: not about those whose lives, whatever the world may think of them, are not failures at all, but successes. Those people do not need my advice: they are with God. But the rest of us, who either have not excelled as we should like to excel in our work; or who have failed the people that we live with; who realise that we are not what we might have been; that we really might have done and might have been a great deal better than we are—who are, in fact, failures in the truest sense—want help much more than they. We know what the world, perhaps, does not know—what a failure we really are. We know how much better we might have done—a thousand times—than we have. The world sees what we achieve, perhaps, and admires and praises, and the world very likely is right. But we see what we do not achieve; we see all the times that we let opportunities pass; we know we might have done and been a great deal better than we have.

Sometimes we all see ourselves clearly. The

fact that some of us have excelled in the world's eyes does not matter. What does matter is our own devastating sense of failure. Think of the people we live with, whom we might have made, perhaps not perfectly happy, but a great deal happier, than we have! Perhaps they are disagreeable people; perhaps they do not really appreciate us or know how charming we are really! All the same, we might have been a little pleasanter to live with than we have been. Perhaps they are very trying people indeed. Some of you, I know, do live with trying people. Yet when you see yourself quite clearly, though it is not all your fault, you feel you might have tried a little harder. You might have put just one more ounce into it. Or your work—the work, that perhaps you did not choose and do not like, yet for some reason you cannot get away from—you shuffle through it anyhow. It is not fair, you feel, that you should be put to work you cannot do well. But all the same, if you *cannot* get away from it, cannot get away from the uncongenial people you live with, cannot get away from some tie, or bond, or duty that is making life very drab and difficult and hard for you—if you cannot, you might put a little more into the business of making the best of it, might you not?

Get out of it, if it is really the wrong work for you—if you can. If you are really living with the wrong people, get out of it—if you can. But

there are some claims you cannot get out of, without walking over somebody else's body. And so you do not. You are bound; and you feel all the time a deep resentment against life, a feeling that people are not fair to you, and that the world has not been fair to you. But when you see yourself quite clearly, you know you could have done a little better than you have and there comes over you a desolating sense of failure.

Take hold of your life again. Take hold of it now, to-night, that hateful job, or those difficult surroundings, or those odious people. Take hold of life again, and see how far the fault is in you. If even once you suddenly see that it has been a little your fault, begin by accepting the fact. Accept the fact that you have failed. After all, 99 per cent. of us have. Whatever we may look like to the world, whether we look hopelessly inefficient, or brilliantly successful, 99 per cent. of us know that according to our own measure of ourselves we have failed. Let us forget for a moment all the faults that belong to the other people. Do not let us pretend any more that it is *entirely* their fault. Let us think of the little bit—perhaps a very little bit in the case of some, but that bit that *is* your fault, accept. Do not let us pretend it is just a "high failure" and better than "low success." We are not to choose between high failure and low success; we

are to choose between low failure and high success. The theory that, after all, we have tried very hard, and perhaps in the sight of God are more successful than we seem to ourselves, is often a demoralising one. If you have got it into your head that you are a failure because you are too good for this world, get it out again. You would not believe how often people tell me that they are too good for their lives! They fail, they think, "because they are too kind," when it is really only because they are too anxious to have people fond of them. They believe they are too large-minded to notice the small troubles of which other people make so much, when really they are only too thick-skinned to notice them. They are so high-minded that they walk over the bodies of other people, and never even see what they are doing. If God were so high-minded that he could not trouble himself about your two-penny-halfpenny troubles and mine he would walk right over us, would he not?

Sometimes we think we are too sensitive. We cannot help losing our tempers and being irritable, because we are so sensitive, much, much more sensitive than the coarse-natured people we have to live with. It is not that we are too sensitive really; it is that we are not strong enough. It is not that we are too good for this world; it is that we have not got ordinary common sense. Over and over again one thinks—I have a hundred

times—that it is because one is really too good, too courageous, or too honest, that one finds the world against him. It is a dangerous excuse. It is more likely that we have not taken trouble enough; that we have not been brave enough; or that we have not taken the trouble to imagine what other people are feeling. Even if the things that worry them and do not happen to worry us are very little things, we may be sure that the things that do worry us are small enough, too. We might be patient, even when little trifling difficulties arise. Ours must look small enough to God.

Abandon the idea that we have failed through too much goodness: but accept the fact that we have failed. Accept it. Take your life as it is. Accept it as it is, and cease from thinking how splendid you would be if only things were different. Take a good look and start again. "Oh, but," you say, "some of us can't. We have lost opportunities that will never come back to us." True: but we have our new ones coming, coming to-night, coming to-morrow. Perhaps they are not so attractive as the old ones you lost, but they are still opportunities, and are coming all the time, and pass you in a stream. Forget the ones that are behind. Forget the ones that you have lost, and do not turn round to look after and bewail them. You have lost them. Very well; they are lost. Put them out of your mind.

For while you are bewailing those you have lost, others are passing you.

Perhaps you have hurt someone irrevocably. Perhaps your failure has involved other people. Perhaps you have hurt them morally. Now they have passed out of your reach, and you cannot get them back to help them. They have gone, and they are damaged. It was you who damaged them, and you cannot undo it. Very well. But there are people round you now. Need you damage them, too? Those people whom we have hurt, whose self-respect, perhaps, we have destroyed, whose courage we have taken away, whose faith in human nature we have shaken, perhaps God, in his infinite mercy, will give them back to us some day to help; but if not, still all round us there are human beings with very little self-respect, very little courage, very little joy in the world. While you are bewailing the ones whom you have damaged, you are casting a cloud over the ones who are coming to you. There are people coming to you to-night, to-morrow, all the time. While they are there, all around you, forget the ones that you have damaged. Or if that is impossible, at least take joy in the fact that all the time a crowd of human beings is round you and passing you. The evil that you did you cannot undo, indeed, but you can redeem it by never damaging other people. Help them while you can, and be joyful in their

joy, and sympathise with their sorrow, and do not hurt, or damage, or destroy.

Perhaps it is yourself that is damaged. We cannot be failures all the time, or even a great deal of the time, without our failure having an effect on our character. The horrible part of it is that if we lose opportunities, we ourselves are damaged. We are not the fine people we might have been. If we had always put that last ounce into our effort we should have grown into something fine; and we have not. We have shrunk into something much less fine than we might have been. We have not got the power; we have not got the insight; we have not got the knowledge and the wisdom that a finer experience would have brought us. If we have slipped along from one failure to another, or from one poor, miserable little success to another, we have at last no power to do the great things that we might have done if we had always done our best.

Well, but you are still there! You are still alive! You are not dead! Begin again, from where you are now. Forget to wring your hands for what you might have been. I dare to say forget it, perhaps, because I know in my heart that you cannot forget it. But at least do not spend your time cursing yourself because you are not the great person that God knows you might have been if you had always put your mind to his service. The fact that you are still

alive gives you opportunities. The fact that you are still there is your chance. If you have definitely descended from a high plane on which you once lived and moved, if you can see that you are not—I will not say what you hoped to be—but even what you once actually were, start on that lower plane. You are there. Start there. Do not waste your time going any lower. Start where you are, and do not think it is noble or praiseworthy to be wringing your hands and cursing yourself for what cannot now be helped. Wherever you are, whether you drink, or take drugs, or steal, or whether you are only guilty of ordinary "respectable sins," like deceit, and insincerity, and selfishness, and jealousy—wherever you are, start there. You are still alive. Begin again, however difficult it is.

You have lost your time at school, and you will never now have a decent education. You have lost your time at college, perhaps; you did not realise how precious it was, and it is gone. You have not read the books you should have read or prepared yourself for your work as you should have done, and though perhaps you scraped through your examinations, that does not amount to very much. Or you are getting older, and the generous enthusiasm of youth has left you. Perhaps you are getting middle-aged, and it seems as if it really is too late now. Perhaps you are more than elderly—you are getting old.

There are only a few years left to you. It does not matter. You are an immortal spirit, and before you stretches eternity. There is no point in your life at which you shall say, "There I give it up: I cannot now do anything." If you are sixteen, or sixty, or a hundred and sixty, it does not matter. You are an immortal spirit. Do not give yourself up, but start again. All eternity before you, and you only on the threshold of it, whatever your years are in this world!

You will have to go back some day and undo all the harm you do. You will have to retrace your steps some day and do again what you have done wrong. You must at last retrace with bleeding feet the path on which you now go from failure to failure. "As a man soweth, so shall he also reap."

But if you take your immortality as a divine inheritance, if to you it is a great thing, and a glory, it is because you are now beginning to retrace your steps, and it is glorious to think that you have eternity in which to grow Godlike. Do not make of that eternal inheritance a curse, by going further and further down, for the time must come when you will retrace your steps and go up again. Why not start now?

Believe me, if you do, if you just take hold of your life and look at it in cold blood, and do not think of all the excuses that could be made for you—for what comfort are they really?—

you will triumph. You do not want excuses, do you? You want to triumph; you want to excel; you want to know that you have taken your life and made what you will out of it. Very well, then. Do not look for excuses. They do not really comfort. They do not really explain. Look at your life dispassionately, and see what can be done with it now.

Suppose you are going to give up your job. Suppose you have only another month of it. Suppose in a little while you are going to leave your home and go somewhere where you expect more congenial companionship than you have ever had; if you have only a day left of your work or your home, make that day a glorious thing. Put the whole of your power into it. You will find that having done that gives you such a sense of power that you will begin to know that there is a power in the universe that could make a success out of any life.

That is what I believe. I believe there is power to make of *any* life a success. If you are forced to stay where you are, there is power enough in the universe for you to make out of that sordid, cramped, uninteresting life, something absolutely glorious.

The more I think of Christ on the cross, the more I am penetrated by the sense that he must have felt he had failed. You perhaps will retort, "Yes, but then he had not." True, he had not

but I think he felt he had. I do not believe that anything short of that shattering sense that everything had failed could have wrung from Christ that awful cry, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The most that most of us could say is, "Why have I forsaken thee?" But Christ, whose one appeal was to love, and whose one answer on Good Friday was—or so it seemed—that everything had failed, cried out, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

Do you know, although this is one of those things one hardly dares to speak about, I think Christ accepted his failure and trusted it to God to do what he could with it. "It is finished. Father, into thy hands I trust my spirit." Do you, who strive, so many of you, in such difficult lives, who have so much, some of you, to contend with, do you also believe that, if you trust your spirit to God, power will come into your life which will transfigure it?

You have the power of God to help you in all those difficulties and perplexities, that devastating sense of failure, of advancing age, perhaps, of passing time, of lost opportunity, of spoilt life. The power of God can triumph over all that and make of it something glorious. It is about us, as the energy of the sun is about us, that streams past this world of ours, and we do not use a billionth part of it. So is it with the power of God. It streams past us, and we do not use one billionth

part of it, but if, setting aside all our regrets, all our excuses, we were to begin once more the battle, we should find the power of God coming to us to triumph.

God grant it to you. God grant it to us all.

EASY WAYS OF BEING GOOD

THERE are no easy ways of being good. I could preach a very short sermon to-night! But there are easy ways of *feeling* good, and I am rather up against them just now. There are ways, quite easy ways, of feeling good, of preserving one's self-respect, of preserving the respect of others, and even believing that one is being good.

Most of us want to be good. Almost everyone perhaps. I believe Mr. Clutton Brock is right when he says that goodness and beauty and truth are things *naturally* desired by human beings. We do not need to say why we want beauty, or why we want truth; the normal human being wants them, because they are fundamentally desirable—desirable in themselves. In just the same way nine hundred and ninety-nine people out of a thousand actually want to be good, but most of them do not want it to the exclusion of everything else. We want it, but we want other things as well. And when we think of wanting to be good, we are rather inclined, I think, to think of the exciting side of being good—the emo-

tion, and the vision, and the thrill, the excitement, the heroism, the romance.

Moreover, most of us want to preserve our self-respect. It is difficult to preserve one's self-respect unless one thinks one is at least as good as other people, and unless one can believe that one does really, on the whole, want to be good. And there are ways—quite easy ways—of achieving all these things.

The thrill, and the vision, and the romance, and even the self-respect are quite easy to attain. You can feel good by going to church and singing sentimental hymns. The more sentimental they are, generally speaking, I think, the more good you feel. Hymns about being sawn asunder, slain with the sword; hymns about your intense desire to die and go to heaven; hymns about the awful weariness of life that you feel, sung in a constant succession in church, will send you away in that spirit of exhausted emotions and consequent crossness which is thought suitable after a great spiritual experience. Unfortunately, for us, Mr. Martin Shaw has torn that pleasure from a great many of us, and converted it into a sorrow. I used to enjoy these things as much as any body, and I cannot now. But I can well remember the joy of singing sentimental hymns and feeling as good as gold.

Then there is another way. If Mr. Martin Shaw, or anyone else, has taken from you that

pleasure, you can feel something of the same thrill, not quite so easily but with an even greater sense of superiority, by doing what people call "worshipping under the blue dome of heaven." These people, I believe, are now very generally known as "blue domers." They eschew churches and places where other people meet, and go out into the country instead. They sit on top of a hill and worship under the blue dome of heaven. I have done that too; and I trust I shall do it again. The best time to do it is on Sunday, some time between six and seven o'clock, because then you can almost always hear church bells in the distance and reflect on the fact that you are not going to church and that quite a large number of mentally deficient people are. There is nothing that adds more to a sense of goodness than that feeling. A very distinguished English divine remarked once, when he heard the church bells in the distance, that the one pleasure that never palled was the pleasure of not going to church. And when you can combine with that the feeling that you are engaged in something far superior, then naturally there is no limit to the goodness that you can feel.

I belong to both these schools, or I did, and I am still something of a blue domer. I wish we could arrange either the weather or the churches so that when there really was a blue dome—which there has not been very often this month—

one could go and worship God there. Certainly there are times when one is the better for worshipping him alone and in the beauty of nature rather than elsewhere. But it is apt to add to the feeling that it is quite easy to be good.

Then, again, it is quite easy, I think, to preserve one's self-respect. Perhaps some of you do not know how to do that, so I will tell you, and you will not be able to say you came to church for nothing to-night! The easy way to do it is always to keep an open mind about everything. Go after every new religion, read every new book, discuss every new question and every old one, and all the time suspend your judgment and keep an open mind. It is a highly respectable attitude and it saves you an infinity of trouble because, you see, you need never act. Your mind is still open, your judgment is still suspended, and while you compliment yourself on the intellectual integrity which forbids you to come to a hasty conclusion, you need—indeed, you must—do nothing. You take no risks; you make no mistakes; you fall into none of those ridiculous misadventures which befall people who make up their minds. Neither are you forced to reflect that perhaps you would not act even if you *had* made up your mind. You can cherish throughout life the pleasant delusion that you would have acted like a hero if only you had been able to decide what to do. You can marvel that other

people, who do seem to have decided, are so often deplorably cowardly about acting. *You* would not be so; *you*, if you had made up your mind, would immediately act upon it. But you cannot make up your mind. Your judgment is in suspense.

So, if you are interested in social reform, or in Christianity, or in any great question, you go from book to book and from conference to conference, always with an open mind, always trying to decide what is the right thing to aim at and the right thing to do. I have heard people say over and over again—people who never do one single thing, good or bad—"I only want to do what is right, but I cannot see what is right." I often think, "How fortunate you are!" If you had had seen what was right, perhaps you would have to do it; and if you did not do it you would have had to face the fact that you are a coward and a skulker. How fortunate you are that you have such an open mind, that you can never decide just what *is* the right thing to do!

I sometimes think that books and study circles and conferences are to some of us as much a form of dope as a sentimental hymn. As long as we are going to conferences about social questions, we convince ourselves that at least we are doing our best to see what is the right thing to do; though, it is true, we rush from one conference to another conference and yet are never able to

make up our minds. We go from leader to leader, we bewail the inability of modern prophets to give us a lead at all. At the end of the conference or the sermon, or the book, or the discussion, we still do not know how to act.

The truth is that it is difficult to act. It is hard to act; it is hard to be good. It is much easier to preserve your self-respect. If we make up our minds on what has to be done, we may make a mistake; or we may find ourselves unwilling to act after all—and that would be extraordinarily unpleasant! We may be faced with the fact that we are really stupid, or cowardly, or slothful. For it is extraordinarily hard to be good, although it is so easy to feel good. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field, the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth *and selleth all that he hath* and buyeth that field."[1]

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who when he had found one pearl of great price, went *and sold all that he had,* and bought it."

It really is no use trying to get the kingdom of heaven for less. All these things I have spoken of are helps—not the bad hymns, but the good ones; the sky, and nature, and the conferences, where you meet with your fellow men and women who are trying to find the way to do what is right;

[1] Matthew XIII.

but none of them will ever be able to find a way for you that is easy—for there is no such way.

That is why so often we say our leaders have not found a way for us; they have not found us an *easy* way, and because we cannot help hoping that after all we shall find it possible to do good and to save the world, to redeem it without having to "sell all that we have" and pay the price, we go on muttering that we cannot make up our minds. You are prepared, and I am, too, to give something. I would give perhaps, quite a good deal; but not all, not everything. So we go from conference to conference and from class to class and from book to book, hoping that at last we shall find a way which will not make too great a demand on us; which will not ask for that interior act of entire self-renunciation which is so hard. Perhaps some conjuring trick will make this possible for us; or if not, perhaps we shall not be asked for quite so high a price.

How human it is! So we go on hoping that somebody will find for us an easy way. The new psychology, or the new religion, or the new thought, or the new philosophy. All of them, believe me, have something to say to us. There is not one that has not some message. But you are hoping, and I am hoping that that message will be a way in which we can be good, a way in which we can make the world better, and not have to give too much for it.

I wrote a book some time ago called "Sex and Common Sense," which had in it a chapter illustrating just the kind of point I am trying to make to-night. I was dealing with a difficulty that faces a great many people, especially the women of this generation, who are not able, within the four walls of our moral code, to satisfy the sex side of their nature. I said that it was possible so to use the creative instinct (which is what the sex instinct really is) on another plane. I said it was possible to transmute this tremendous impulse, this hunger of sex, and use it in another way, on a plane which instead of being both spiritual and physical, as sex love ought to be, must be spiritual only. I claimed that it was possible for a life based on this belief to be joyful and full and rich and fertile; that it is not necessary for us to resign ourselves to a life that is narrow and cramped and sterile but that, in the deepest sense of the word, it could be fruitful and glorious and joyful. I pointed to our Lord as an instance of one who had transmuted the whole of his creative power into a spiritual energy so great that no one could say of him that he was not a Lover, since he was the greatest Lover the world had ever seen. I claimed that, in their degree, Francis of Assisi, Joan of Arc, Catherine of Siena, Theresa of Spain had done, and other men and women can do, the same thing. Well, then, people begin to write to me about this book and

say, "This is a very difficult task! What are men, shattered or impoverished by the war—women denied their natural satisfaction—to do with their sex instincts? Miss Royden says, 'Transmute it into something on another plane.' That is not an answer! It may be possible for the exceptional man and woman, but we do not think it is very useful of Miss Royden to point the ordinary man and woman to Christ, and say, 'He was able to do it; so can you.' The ordinary person is not a Christ, a Francis, a Joan of Arc, and such advice, though doubtless, very beautiful, is for the exceptional person. It is no answer at all to most of us."

It is no answer if you are looking for an easy answer; yet it is the only answer that it is possible to give. There is no other answer; there is no other way out. None. This is the way out. Did I ever pretend that it was an easy way? It is not easy to turn any of your natural instincts out of the normal, natural channel and force them into another. If you think there is an easy path, go and look for it. But I warn you beforehand there is no such path. You can let your power run to waste if you like. You can leave the world just a few degrees worse than it was because you lived in it, instead of a few degrees better. You can do that, but that is not a way out. That does not solve any difficulty.

Someone comes to me and asks, "Show me

what is the right thing to do," and I show them that path and they say, "That is not possible." What they mean is, "That is not easy." Well, it is *not* easy. God forbid that I should ever deceive anyone into thinking that it is easy. But it is glorious, it is joyful, it is inspiring. It is not easy; that I never promised. In your physical nature there is sex; and if you do not use the sexual energy in the normal, physical way, the power that is there, the vitality, is absorbed into your system in such a way that it gives power and vitality to you. That is a physiological fact. But by no degree of continence of body or chastity of mind will *all* that power be taken up into your body. Some of it must be wasted, and that is hard for you to bear. There is not any way by which that can be made perfectly easy to control. It is precisely the same if I speak of your psychological nature, of that instinct to create and to love, to give and to unite with those you love. That impulse, that energy makes you a vital being. Without it you are only half a human being, whether you are a man or woman. With out it you are defective, you are not fully alive. Very well. That power you can take up into your life and use it for all that is great and creative. Christ did this. So have all the great saints in their degree. But not all the continence and chastity in the world will enable you to escape scot-free, not to suf-

fer from that desire which you cannot wholly transmute.

That residue which you cannot find any way of using will hurt. Be it so. Cease to seek an escape. What made you think life could be easy? As long as you are a living human being it is not possible; but this is the only way out that is glorious and joyful and powerful and full of life. You cannot get power, power in the best sense I mean—cheaply. You cannot save the world at any easy rate. If it cost Christ the crucifixion, can you do it, do you think, more cheaply? No, you cannot. And the power that in your body follows from a truly chaste life, the power that in your spirit comes from a chastity of spirit, the power that enables you to love the world, to love all human beings with the great love of a great lover—do you think you can get that easily? Why, it is senseless, on the face of it, to think so!

This world has been plunged into hell. Can you pick it out as though it were a little thing? The consequence of a war so hideous is hatred so vile and so cruel that the world is laid waste by it, and you expect someone to write a book and tell you how to escape the consequences easily! No, no! That is impossible. It is not easy, it is only joyful.

Indeed all those new religions that preach to you that joy and happiness, health and love, and

all good and perfect gifts, come from God are right. They are most right to preach to you a gospel of joy. But this joy was at the heart of it an act of renunciation so complete that Christ could even liken it to the crucifixion.

Go to some new class in psychology, or theosophy, or new thought, or higher thought, or whatever you like to call it; and they will give to you a message of joy. They are all of them right. But did you ever know the leader of such a class or such a movement whose life, if you came to think of it, was not one long act of self-renunciation? If they are full of joy, if they are full of power, it is because they have first denied their very selves. Therefore they are set free into the liberty of glory and joy of Christ. But this is not easy, and those deceive you who would persuade you that it is.

"The good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do." These struggles go with us to the end, and for you to demand that it should be easy is vain. Do not shrink away from the fact that life hurts. "Not on plumes nor canopied in down the soul wins fame." But if you accept that truth, there is no reason why any preacher in the world should hesitate to point out to you that what Jesus Christ achieved he calls us to achieve also.

Those moralists, I am persuaded, are mistaken who say to us, "You, of course, are not expected

to be a great saint, nor to achieve any extraordinary thing." Why should you not be a great saint? Why not? The power is there, the power of God, and it is contemptible to decide beforehand that for you some half measure, some half life, some half sacrifice is enough, No—"all of you are children of the most High," and therefore to all it is possible to tread that path of self-renunciation which is the price of glory and joy and life.

TEMPERAMENT

THE triumph of human beings over nature has become such a common-place that it is almost impossible for us now to be surprised at anything that science can promise or perform. Many of us were more excited when we heard that M. Bleriot had flown over the Channel than we were when someone flew over the Atlantic Ocean, because science now advances with such strides and with such triumphant assurance of its power that we are bankrupt of astonishment.

I was reminded when I was in America that Abraham Lincoln could not travel faster than the first Abraham that we ever heard of—unless a horse does go faster than a camel? To-day you can speak on one side of the Atlantic and have your voice carried across in a few seconds of time. News can be sent in that little space of time, which a hundred years ago took four or five months to cross the United States. This has become so commonplace to us that we hardly feel surprised.

Science has taught us such an extraordinary mastery over the material world that we *expect* to triumph, and we forget that the whole of that

mastery is due to obedience, based on the conviction of the ordinary man that he cannot escape scientific law. All great scientists have always known that. Before they were able to convince the ordinary person, they were wise if they kept their knowledge to themselves, or they would very likely be burnt or stoned as magicians! But when the ordinary person grasped the universal character of scientific law, there was at first a sense of profound depression. If you read the poets and the prose-writers, and the preachers, and even, sometimes, the scientists also, of the middle of the nineteenth century—men like Tennyson and Matthew Arnold, and even Huxley —you will be struck by the sense of despondency with which these men realised that we cannot escape scientific law. The effect upon them was of paralysis. They felt that kind of fatalism, that dreary inability to alter things, or to mould their lives, or to have any freedom, which came of a "mechanical" view of the universe. We ourselves, it seemed, were only parts of a great machine, and there came over the spirit of thinking men and women a sense of helplessness and despondency. Huxley, in his ironical fashion, draws a mocking contrast between that early astronomy which taught that the stars were kept in their courses by celestial hands, and our present belief that they are kept there by the laws of gravitation. The impression one gets is that,

for him, as for the theologians and the poets and the dreamers, something of beauty and glory had passed away from the earth. One gets it still more strongly in the poetry of Matthew Arnold or Tennyson. Yet how strange it seems to us now that it should have been so! Because in fact, the discovery of scientific law—not merely by the genius and scientist but by the ordinary man and woman in the street—has resulted in setting us free, in giving us a power over that universe which is governed by law, which would have seemed to our forefathers simply miraculous.

We can see millions of miles; we can hear across the world; we can throw our voice around the world; we can rise into the air; we can plunge beneath the sea; we can alter climates; we can change the face of the world. All this has become possible precisely *because* we know that the world is governed by unbreakable law. Knowledge, instead of making us slaves, has set us free.

"The powers that be are ordained of God." St. Paul, I suppose, was not thinking of scientific laws, and with much of what he says in this passage some of us would be tempted to disagree. But in the sense that we think of "law" to-night, how inspired it is!

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

"Whosoever therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

Is not that scientific law? You must obey the great power which is expressed in what we call scientific law, and if you do not obey it, you break yourself. If you do obey, you gain almost unbelievable power over the world in which you live.

Later, and still very slowly, we have begun to realise that law is present not only in the "natural" universe, the material universe with which we are surrounded, but in human affairs also. The idea of law as an arbitrary thing which men could enact or suspend or repeal as they chose, is being gradually superseded by a scientific understanding of the fact that whatever you may do, there are certain laws in human affairs which cannot be broken: laws which to obey gives power, and to seek to disobey brings, as St. Paul puts it, "damnation."

We all to-day talk glibly enough about economic law. We have begun to realise that the old way in which Parliaments used to pass laws about prices and about wages was unsound, because they ignored fundamental laws; and if there are fundamental laws, it is as senseless for Parliament to sit there wasting time passing what it calls laws, violating these fundamental principles, as it would be for them to sit and pass laws against

the law of gravitation. Consequently, there has come to many, first of all, that sense of impotence and despair, that despondency which came to people when they first understood scientific law.

We say sometimes, rather mournfully, that it is no use legislating or trying to change things very much: "you cannot fight against economic law." The idea, as I said before, that there are fundamental principles which it is not in our power to change or escape has at last moved from our conception of the material world to our conception of our own human affairs. It has been followed, as before, with the sense of despondency, the fear that we cannot do very much because there are against us certain forces which we cannot escape. Why should there be despondency? Mr. Chesterton rightly says that if you jump over a precipice you do not break the law of gravitation. We could add, could we not, that if you fly in the air you do not break the law of gravitation. We can fly to-day because scientists and engineers have understood the laws which govern flight, and instead of trying to work against them the aviator is obeying them all the time, and because he obeys them he *seems* able to violate them. But there is no one person here who dreams that you really violate the law of gravitation when you fly in the air. The same argument applies to economics, but it has not yet been quite freely applied, because there are people to whom

it is easier to resign themselves to things as they are than to make the necessary effort to find out along what lines and in what way we can get the power to change them.

Most of us are in the same case with regard to that wonderful new science which I believe is going to mark an epoch—no, not to mark, but to make an epoch—in the advance of humanity. We have witnessed, in our generation, what is practically the birth of a new science. It is still very new. I believe it to be sometimes worshipping false gods, and very often speaking a ridiculous language. But, I believe, as many of you do also, that the modern idea of psychology is practically a new science, that it deserves the name of science, precisely because it has grasped the fact that our minds also are governed by universal law. As I said, the lonely genius cannot really help us much, until we believe him. Saints and psychologists have always known these laws concerning human nature; but it is only in the twentieth century that ordinary people have grasped the implication, the meaning and the importance of the discovery that our minds, our temperaments, our characters, are also governed by law. It is that conviction, which modern psychologists have brought home to quite ordinary people, that I believe will be the starting-place of a new and great development of power and freedom in the human race.

"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Thus says St. Paul. These words seem to me more true, more wonderful to-day, than perhaps at any other time since he wrote them.

Knowing the time, that it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light.

It is light that enables us to direct our own powers, as it was light that gave us power over the world in which we live. It is light that modern psychology is bringing us to-day, the light which will enable us to conquer ourselves.

Now, of course, in a sense, people have always conquered themselves, thank God. There has been a certain instinctive knowledge and also a highly trained and experienced knowledge among spiritual advisers, of the way in which people may direct themselves. But it is a tremendous advance when we ourselves begin to understand how the thing is done.

We do not know to-day from what early form our great possession of wheat has come. We know that it must have been developed through ages and ages from some much less valuable and

useful form. To know the exact way in which it was done would not make it any less wonderful, any less of a miracle. It is a cheap and foolish mind which to-day should think that because we are beginning to understand something of the processes by which a man may conquer himself, that process is less wonderful, less miraculous, less glorious. On the contrary, as Professor Thomson taught us, our wonder should increase; but with that wonder should come something of the determination to conquer, something of the assurance of ultimate conquest which has been the glory of the scientists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

So, to-day, we are faced, all of us, with the necessity of ordering our own lives and conquering our own temperaments. And we have, moreover, the assurance of the power to do so which was lacking to previous generations. Yet, here again, there arises first of all in the minds of many of us the sense of despondency. Because the psychologists will tell you exactly what your difficulties are, and why they come to be there, and how effect always follows cause, the first impression of many of those who read the subject is one of impotence. There is, of course, a certain school of teachers who give you the feeling that because you have a certain heredity, because certain things happened to your parents, because certain things happened to you when you were a

child, ill effects inevitably follow, and you are helpless in the power of these laws of psychology.

The law of cause and effect has produced in you that weakness, that despondency, that irregularity, that dislocation of mind, and because you recognise it to be the effect of a cause and the cause has escaped your control—since it originated in your past life, or perhaps in your parents' lives—therefore there comes to you something of that feeling of despondency which came with the first discovery of natural law.

If our own minds are governed by law, if, because something terrible happened to you when you were a child, you now suffer your present trouble, what is the use of striving against it? You cannot remove it because its cause lies in the past. It is out of your control. It never was in your control. Or again, if there is in your present circumstances something that you cannot escape—you are doing the wrong work, or doing it under the wrong conditions, or some side of your nature is unfulfilled, your sex-instincts or your true vocation, and it is not possible—let us say—to alter these things, then you must suffer. If some power that is in you has to be suppressed it sets up in you a ferment and a revolt. Or again, if some check has been imposed on you in the past, it has set up in you a nervousness, an irritability, a weakness, a fear—anything you like that is troublesome and difficult—and the

very fact that you know how it has happened only makes you feel helpless. Yet the result of knowledge should always be power, and always has been power when knowledge has become understanding.

To know that the world is governed by laws that you cannot escape, to him who *knows* it may be paralysis, but to him who *understands* it is freedom and power. So I am persuaded that those psychologists are most right and most prophetic who find in the knowledge they are able to give us not paralysis but power. To know that something has happened to you which has upset your nervous balance may, in the first instance, be paralysing; but when you understand all, it will mean power, for you are now working in the light. You can see what has happened to you. You can understand it. You can, if you will, take the same, or nearly the same, detached view of your own character and your own temperament as you could of someone else's. That is science indeed.

That is why I believe that there will come to this generation a power to change human nature, or if not to change it—for that, I think, a little begs the question—to redirect its energies, to use them in the right way, to use them creatively instead of wastefully, which will make the twentieth century one of the greatest pages in human history.

But many of us neither believe in our power nor welcome it. Is it unfair to say that the rich man sometimes welcomes the fact that "economic law" justifies him in accepting as inevitable unemployment or poverty? Is it unfair to say that we are sometimes ready to welcome the assumption that psychological knowledge justifies us in resignation to our temperaments? It is so much easier, is it not, to be resigned than to fight? There has arisen a kind of "Manchester School" of psychologists, like the Manchester School of economists who said there were certain economic laws which we must allow to work themselves out without interference, and then everything would come right. So I sometimes think that there is a kind of Manchester School of psychologists who say there are certain laws which will work themselves out, and we can and need do nothing. Can we not? Need we not? I think we both need and can. It is not merely by knowing scientific law that you overcome the world: it is by applying it. Now, therefore, let us apply the knowledge that psychology has given us.

Do you not often find yourself saying, when people complain of something you have done or been or said, "Well, you see, I am like that!" Somebody makes every breakfast in his house —I say advisedly "his house," though it is certainly sometimes "her house"—a nightmare,

by coming down with a face of sulky rage, and looking out for everything that can annoy him; and if you complain, he will say, with complacency, "I am never at my best in the early morning." He will see to it that no one else within the radius of his influence is at his or her best either! Why should the cloud of his preposterous depression blacken everyone else's morning? Because he is "like that." It is true: he is like that. But need he be like that?

There are people who are given to violent explosions of temper, and when the shattered victims of their rage protest, they say complacently, "Oh, I am like that, you know! But it doesn't last. It is all over in a second." Their household is a stricken field. For them it is all over in a second, and they are genuinely surprised and even hurt at the fact that it is not quite over with the rest of the household.

There are people who take the opposite line. With them it is not over in a second. Quite the contrary. They cannot ever forget some trifling error, some unintended slight, some unconscious mood. They cannot forget it because they are "so sensitive." They are "like that"—so sensitive that a word may blacken the whole day for them. But ought it to blacken the whole day for them? Ought you to be so insanely sensitive that you must sulk a day or a week if someone hurts you? Do you realise—I am sometimes tempted to

wonder if any of us realise—the devastating effect on others of what we are pleased to call our "moods"?

To be moody is the temperament of many people, but when the mood has passed for them, its shadow has fallen so deep upon their friends and relations that it cannot quickly pass. Then the moody one experiences surprise and regret that others should be so sulky and so unreasonable! Few of us realise how hard it is to have the sunshine blackened by our depression, by our mood, which we could conquer if we would.

What a lesson in the art of victory is contained in the passage I read just now from Mr. Cherry Garrard's book!

"Temperamentally he (Scott) was a weak man and very easily might have been an irritable autocrat." Because he would not be an irritable autocrat, the very fact of his moods and his difficulties gave him, I am certain, a power over fate, over circumstances, over other men, which began with the assertion of this power over himself. Those of you who are naturally "temperamental" (to use a much abused word), who are moody and unequal in spirit, who are irritable and hate yourselves for it, should find in such a story as this of Scott's, a magnificent inspiration; for the impression that one gets from it is that it was by the very fact of his fighting with his

difficulties that he achieved such power. Men came to love him and to follow him because he had gone through that, and with such magnificent determination had conquered it. "Naturally so weak, naturally so peevish, highly strung, irritable depressed, moody"—that is the man who goes to the South Pole, where conditions impose a nervous strain so great that, as Mr. Cherry Garrard says elsewhere, it was impossible for the best friends to speak to one another for days at a time, because they were so afraid of saying something outrageous. The nervous strain on all was terrific and this man who, by nature, was peevish, highly strung, irritable, depressed, moody, was recognised by all those others as their natural leader and their king. In a company of men which contained a man like Dr. Wilson, a man like Captain Bowers, whose natural temperaments were serene, calm, tactful, cheerful, indomitable—even in a company where two such men were to be found, Scott was recognised as the strongest of them all. "We never knew how strong he was," writes Mr. Garrard, "till we saw him there, lying dead." The last to die, the one who held out longest. It is perhaps only when one realises what men like Wilson and Bowers were that one realises what a king Scott must have been, to be as Mr. Garrard says, "the most dominant character of our community." I am persuaded that it was precisely because he had to conquer these

apparently humiliating defects of moodiness and irritability and nervous strain and despondency, and that at the last, even, he had them writhing under his heel but not killed, that he so dominated that little community. This man would not admit that because a thing was his temperament, it was therefore to be his fate. "Your temperament is not your fate," it has been said. "Temperament decides our trials; it does not decide our destiny."

You perhaps find it hard to work with others; you are one of those capable and efficient people who say, "I would rather do a thing myself than trouble other people with it." Yes, but that does not help the other people to do all that they might, does it? You had to be taught once. Someone had to be patient with you, and to be unable to be patient with others is not something that is an inalienable part of your temperament. It is something that you have to conquer.

Or you find it terribly difficult not to be irritable. I feel sure that in twentieth century life there is a very much greater nervous strain on all of us than has been the case in the past. Many of us, therefore, are nervous and irritable and highly strung. What then? Then we are called upon to have the greater power over ourselves; to understand our dangers and our difficulties, to trace them to their source, to deal with them wisely, but always with the assurance of triumph,

which is the great gift of science to twentieth century people. "I am like that." Yes, you *are* like that. *What are you going to do about it?* That is the question that modern psychology is putting to you and to me, and it puts it with that kind of assurance that there is something that you *can* do about it which will make all the difference between working in the dark and in the light.

Knowledge means power, and knowledge is given to us in full measure. Let us work while it is day. While the light comes to us, let us go forward. It may be that to this generation there has come one of those great and dramatic moments when all Humanity makes a forward stride, because for the first time not the saint only, or the scholar or the genius, but you and I are dealing with our own temperaments no longer in the dark but in the light.

LONELY PEOPLE

THAT ancient Latin saying that I read just now is painfully true, is it not? "A great city, a great solitude." I do not think there are lonelier places in the world than great cities, if one has no friends. "For little do men perceive what solitude is, nor how far it extendeth; for a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love." People may come up to London from their homes, and find here six or seven millions of people, and no friends. To those people we should all of us try to extend our friendship. All of us should remember what a lonely place London is, and be on the look-out for people who come up here, whether young or old, and find themselves without any friends. One of the chief purposes of our Guildhouse ought to be, I think, that it should help people to make friends with one another.

It is unnatural not to have friends. Another great writer has said that man is "naturally a political animal." (He did not mean in the sense that an Englishman is a political animal.

I think Englishmen are political animals, and Englishwomen too.) He meant in the sense that they naturally live together. The word "political" meant, to him, belonging to a community, and it is natural for men to live in cities or communities; unnatural, as he says, "either god-like or beast-like" to want to live alone. That is true, is it not? in the sense that it is unnatural to be solitary, and one can see by the effect that it has on people how bad it is for them: how people who have for long been lonely get a kind of stiffness in their spiritual joints. They cannot easily let themselves go; they cannot easily give themselves away, even when they want to. They cannot express their desire for love; they cannot express their own love when they feel it. They find it difficult to form the habit of being at ease and natural with other human beings. Those who want to make friends with lonely people should realise that. I would urge them very strongly to remember that it is very unnatural not always to have had friends. Nature plants us in the middle of a family. We are born into families in order that we may have human society round us, a permanent society, a stable home, brothers and sisters as well as parents. All these things are "wealth" to human nature, because they make us truly human. Therefore do not be discouraged if you find a person who has long been lonely, difficult to make friends

with. Do not be impatient; do not think you can easily break down the walls of their reserve. They have built round themselves—unwillingly—a kind of wall, in order that they may hide their solitude behind it, and you cannot easily break it down. You must not even try hurriedly to break down the reserve of any human spirit. Because people have been lonely in the past, it almost inevitably follows that they will find it difficult now to form the habit of making friends. Consider that that lonely soul may have, as I shall show a little later on, some gift that humanity is the poorer for lacking; but that he or she cannot easily give it, because to give it is to give himself away, and the lonely person has made almost a virtue of never giving himself away for fear what he gives may be scorned. It is one of the saddest things about loneliness that it makes a natural demeanour and buoyancy impossible—literally impossible. The sensitive spirit inevitably cramps itself or is cramped by that unnatural loneliness, and always, in making friends with the lonely, remember that it takes reverence and respect and a very real love for human nature to enable us to "make friends" with anyone.

People sometimes, I think, offer their friendship in the insufferable way in which others offer charity! You know there was once a man with whom no girl would dance because he said he always made a point of dancing with wallflowers!

Consequently he could find in the end no one to dance with at all. There are some people who go about in an almost professional way trying to be kind to the lonely, in such a way that the lonely would rather perish than accept their kindness. We need that kind of reverence for the human spirit which makes one gentle and willing to wait, and involves always a respect for the personality of others quite as great as we expect other people to give to ours.

I speak for a moment, first of all, *about* lonely people, but I want chiefly to speak to-night *to* lonely people. The worst punishment that humanity now tolerates for the criminal is solitary confinement, a punishment so dread and so inhuman that it breaks the spirit and sometimes unhinges the reason of the person who is subjected to it. Since the militant suffragists and conscientious objectors have been in prison, they—being more articulate, more able to express themselves than ordinary convicts—have been able to tell us a little of what prison life means. Those of you who have read, and I hope most of you have, such a book as "English Prisons To-day," by Mr. Stephen Hobhouse and Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, will remember that terrible description of the effect of this apparently comparatively harmless punishment of solitary confinement. There is no physical torture, and yet solitude is so profoundly unnatural to the human spirit that

those who have gone through it, or who know people who have gone through it, say that it is impossible to describe its terrors. And there are people, not within prison walls, who seem to walk about the earth under a perpetual sentence of solitary confinement; people whose spirits are so lonely that they seem as though they *cannot* make friends.

Either they cannot make friends or they cannot keep them. I do not know which is worse, but either is very bitter to the human spirit. To what is it due? It is due sometimes, I know, to circumstances, to some solitary position in life, some difficulty in one's surroundings. But far oftener it is due to something in the spirit of the person himself, some attitude towards life which imposes upon him this terrible sentence of solitary confinement. It is not the lack of fine qualities—quite the contrary; some of these lonely spirits have qualities so fine, abilities so rare, that it is inexplicable to the onlooker that they should be lonely. Yet they are so. Their chief sorrow in life is their loneliness, their inability to make really close and satisfying friendships. And these people, I repeat, are often people of great gifts, not only of intellectual gifts but of moral gifts, people of courage, people of character, people who carry weight where they go, who have intellectual powers and strong character, people who can do things and who are of value in the

world, from whom you cannot if you would withhold your admiration. Yet there is over their lives this terrible shadow: they cannot make friends, or if they make friends they lose them. Yet they desire friends. For such persons as I have described, being fine people and gifted people, desire friends with a hunger which makes their solitude heartrending. It is a source of so much unhappiness that one cannot help asking oneself what is the cause. It is true that London is a lonely place. It is true that if you come up to London without friends, it may be terribly difficult to make any. And yet there are people who will make friends anywhere.

You all know about François de Bonnivard, the Prisoner of Chillon; you probably learned about him when you were at school. He made friends with a spider! He was imprisoned for life, and he made friends with a spider that came up the wall of the cell. Other life-prisoners have made friends with rats or mice. I think of such people as having such a genius for friendship that they cannot help making friends. Put a man like that alone in a cell, cut him off from all human intercourse, and he will make friends with a rat! Well, put such a man in London, and however lonely London may be he will make friends. There are people whom you may put into any kind of surroundings and they will make friends. I have in mind a friend of mine whose

circumstances have all been against her in the way of making friendships. I think that most people living her life would have lived a lonely life. She has never perhaps been able to choose her friends, and yet she has many friends, because she has a genius for friendships. It was only when she herself once said to me that she envied my going to college when I was a girl, because, as she said, "at college you have such opportunities of making friends," that I realised this. I said, "Well, you have no reason to complain on that score, you have so many friends." She said, "Yes, it is true, but *I made the friends that were there.* I do not think I ever had a chance of choosing my friends."

Is not that really the heart of the trouble? We should make friends with the friends who are there. So often lonely people will tell you in the end that they do not care to make friends with such and such another person who is also lonely and wants friends: that is not the kind of friend they want: they have in their mind some high ideal of the sort of person that they want for a friend. Is that really a high ideal of friendship, or is it a high ideal of your own deserts? I speak with feeling, because I remember myself desiring friends intensely and being absolutely unable to make friends. I marvelled at myself, and could not understand it, and thought to myself, with ineffable complacency, that it was because I had

such a high ideal of friendship that nobody that I had met yet had ever come up to it. I see now that my "high ideal" was simply a form of conceit. I thought that that was the only kind of friendship that was good enough for me. I did not realise that making friends is a habit, and that you must practise it wherever you get the chance!

Making friends is a habit. It is the habit of giving yourself away, and the idea that you must not give yourself away is the real root of essential loneliness. Leaving out for a moment those people (and indeed I do not think there are many) whose circumstances make it impossible for them to make friends, I say of the average lonely person that ninety-nine times out of a hundred their loneliness comes from a deep refusal to give *themselves* away. They call it reserve or self-respect, and say they will not cast their pearls before swine; but, indeed—I speak to those lonely people who know perhaps at this hour what I have known in the past, the unspeakable bitterness of solitude—it is really that you have not made the habit or recognised the necessity of giving *yourself* away.

There are in the world what William James called "sky-blue souls," people who make friends as easily as they breathe, people whose souls are of that celestial hue that there is no shadow in them at all—"no flapping of unclean wings about

their cells"; people to whom the love of their kind is so natural, so easy, that it goes out to everyone. To such happy souls all that I shall say to-night must seem curiously morbid and unnatural and laboured. But it is not the fault of us others that we are naturally introspective and self-centred and morbid. To be so may *become* a fault, but in the first instance it is perhaps an inheritance, something that we did not choose to have. If we could have chosen, we should have been one of those sky-blue souls who easily make friends! But we are not, and to be as we are is not a sin, in the sense that we are responsible for it. No one is responsible. It is not reasonable even to blame our ancestors; they may blame their ancestors in turn! But there it is, that temperament, naturally self-centred, naturally self-conscious, naturally introverted, introspective. To say to such people, "Just forget yourselves" is to add bitterness to their sufferings. It is precisely there that they find the difficulty! And yet if one could make a habit of giving, if one could realise, as a constant state of mind, that in friendship you have to give something that is more than your help, your service, your time; it is *yourself* that you have to give, it is possible in time to overcome that self-centred, introspective view which makes it seem a kind of outrage to give ourselves away to anyone.

Make friends with those who are there for you

to make friends with. Do not be searching the horizon for an ideal friend. Are you an ideal person that you should have an ideal friend? What would you do with an ideal friend if you had one? Disappoint him all the time! Make friends with the people who are there to make friends with. They will be better than spiders after all, or, at least, if there are some animal-lovers here who would prefer a spider—and I am sure there are many who will prefer a dog—still, believe me, they are wrong. The human being with whom you may make friends has much more to give you, infinitely more than you suspect, and perhaps much more than you deserve. But you ask yourself, do you not? when you try to make friends, whether such a person is worth making a friend of, worth the sacrifice of your reserve, and whether you perhaps are worthy to be their friend? It is all so self-conscious, so laboured, so artificial. Yes, I know, but it is the beginning of a habit which will afterwards become like second nature. "For use almost can change the stamp of nature." It is possible to learn by practice the habit of friendship; but it must be practised on the people who are there; you must not go round the world looking for someone; there are the people around you now; those are the people for you to make friends with. It is again and again against a blank refusal to make friends with the people who are there that

I find all my attempts to help the lonely, as far as I am concerned, have broken down. People would like to make friends with some great person, some very good person; to them they feel that they can give themselves. They think perhaps, though they do not say, that such an exchange will be a fair one! But say to them, "Well, I am so glad to have met you who are lonely, because Mr. Jones over the way is very lonely," and you find at once that Mr. Jones is not the person they want to make friends with. Is it not then, their fault if they are lonely?

With all the difficulties in the world before you, of circumstances and environment, the fundamental difficulty lies, not in London, not in the size or greatness of it, not in your poverty or difficulties, but in yourself, because you have never formed the habit of giving anything of yourself at all to people, until you have weighed them in the balance and felt quite sure that they were worthy of so great a gift. All the world is filled with human beings who are your potential friends, and all the time that you live without friends you are making more and more difficult for yourself the habit of friendship. When you make a friend at last, the same kind of temperament is easily very jealous and very exclusive, and being so, it kills the friendship made. For love will not tolerate that kind of possessiveness. Love is of all things the one that must be most

free to give itself where it will. Because a person has become your friend, is that a reason why he should have no other friend? Are you enough to fill a person's heart? He is enough, you say; such-and-such a person is enough for me: why cannot I be enough for him? He is enough for you, she is enough for you, because your little heart is so narrow, because you have cramped your mind and restricted your interests in your solitude until you cannot take in more than one person. Do you desire that to be true of your friend also? Could you wish that you should be enough for your friend, that he or she should have no other friend, no other interests, at least none comparable to yourself? Do you not see how you create your own loneliness? You desire to impose upon your friends the narrow limitations that govern your own heart. You cannot bear to see them as fond of anyone else as they are of you, giving them more time, seeming perhaps to give them more interest. You should rejoice that they have escaped from those narrow prison bars behind which you walk. Is that too hard? But, reflect: narrowness kills love, because it is love's opposite. It destroys the very heart of love, and so that loneliness which for an hour or a year you thought was gone for ever, because you had found a friend, returns, because either your friend is weary of your perpetual demands that you should be enough for him who is enough

for you, or the friendship is endured rather as an act of duty and conscience than with that joyful love that you desire. Is a love shared with other people not enough for you? Well, if it is not enough, it is not because you love your friend so much, it is because of your hungry, avid egotism. If you even *desire* to swallow up that person's affection in your own, is it not true that your loneliness is your fault?

If you look at the world to-day (and forget yourself for a moment) what will you say the world is dying for? Love! The world perishes with hate, it dies for lack of love, it is sick and poisoned with hate, and what it needs is the kind of love that God gives, divine love, unexacting love, giving all. You say that you are lonely and have no one to love, and in the same breath you must admit that the world perishes for lack of precisely that—love. Do you not see what a contradiction it is? You and I have complained that we have no one who really desires our friendship and our love. We felt that our love was worth so much, that our friendship would have been such a gift. Yes, and in a sense we are right. The real love of any human being is a great gift. But in this world that starves for love, will you say that you can find no one to whom to give any love, no one who needs it? Why, all the world is dying for lack of it! And yet there are people, hundreds, thousands, perhaps

millions who are lonely, because they will not love the people all around them who are also craving for love. They look for someone else who is more worthy.

If God were looking for some love that would be worthy of him he would never be loved at all, would he? He takes any kind of love, and I believe he rejoices in it. I think one of the most striking things I ever read about the love of God was in an unpublished essay about the joy that a mother feels when she knows that her child has learnt to recognise her. The writer, who was herself a mother, said, "I remember when my first child first knew me. He only knew that I was to him a source of food, but I shall never forget the rapture with which I realised that he did know that." And she went on, "I think that our love of God is often no more understanding than that baby's love of its mother. And yet I can imagine the joy that it is to God that we recognise him at all."

The kind of love which makes God welcome from us any kind of response, the love which does not wait, any more than this woman's love for her child waited, for recognition, but goes out first of all, is that for which the world is longing. "Beloved, herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he first loved us." That is the beginning of all friendship. You must not wait for someone to love you. Herein is love, not that your friend

loved you first, but that you loved him. You have experience of such kind of love from your parents, from your friends. Nurses often have it for their little charges; teachers often have it for their pupils. Their love is given without waiting for a return, without measuring whether the child is able to give them a return equal to the value of their love. That their love goes out to them—herein is love. That calculating, careful love which considers whether a person is worthy of your friendship, weighs them up, says, Such a one is not good enough for me to love, is not love. Love hates "the lore of nicely calculated less and more."

Christ has been called the Great Solitary, and in this sense he was solitary, that no one was worthy of his friendship; that he gave to all his friends something better than they could give to him; a more perfect understanding, a more lovely justice, a more entire constancy. Yet it is true that in another sense he was not solitary at all. For he had friends, a circle of friends, and an inner circle of friends, people for whom he had a personal love as well as all the love that he gave to all the world. He taught us by his attitude towards the outcast, the publican and the sinner, the socially despised, the morally worthless or apparently worthless, the Gentile—he taught us by his attitude to all to feel reverence for everyone who is willing to love. With what respect he

treated their affection and their loyalty! With what a friendship he lived on terms with his friends! How little, in proportion, have any of us to give! If he did not ask whether these people were worthy of his friendship, how is it possible for us who have so little love to give, to ask it? So little time, so little understanding, so little patience! I sometimes wonder, do not you? that we have any friends at all. I suppose at the end of one's life the thing that will strike most of us most of all is the much that our friends did for us and the little that we were able to do for them. I cannot believe there can be anyone in the world who has had friends who is not continually struck with the enormous debt that he owes them. They set you right with life. They enable you to be yourself. Is it not enough? Is it not much? What more should you ask from them than that most precious and lovely gift—that they enable you to be on terms with life? That, any friend can give you, and then, beyond that, your friend also, perhaps, is on terms with life because of you, and able to use gifts that you did not suspect were there, and to blossom out into happiness and usefulness; and all those things are happiness to you.

In a sense it is true that all of us are lonely. Putting aside that loneliness which comes of a stubborn refusal to give oneself it does happen to everyone sometimes to feel lonely.

I pass away now from that terrible permanent loneliness of which I have chiefly spoken, and before I stop let me say one word about that kind of loneliness which comes to everyone, because all of us are a little egotistical and therefore, all of us make our friends feel lonely sometimes. All of us. The One who was the best Friend in the world, Christ himself, was made to feel lonely sometimes by lack of understanding and egotism, and what is true of him is true of us, only that we also in our turn make our friends sometimes feel lonely. I do not know whether it is possible for me to convey to you in any language that experience, the unspeakable happiness of feeling that God is your friend. I mean in a personal sense—I mean God as you see him in Jesus Christ. But I think those who do not know it might a little imagine it, if they could realise that we believe there is a personal living relationship with Someone who is always just. The trouble with introspective people is that first of all they think you have not been just to them, and then they think that perhaps they have deceived you. Sometimes I can remember going to see somebody on whom I desired to make a good impression. I did not realise that that was what I desired but I can see now that I did. When I went away from that interview, I used to go over every word I had said and wonder how it had affected them, and was very often miserable about it,

and reflected that I really had not done myself justice! That kind of attitude is devastating to the spirit, is it not? There is no peace to that kind of mind except to know that you have a Friend—I put it in the simplest language—who is never deceived by you, who is never "bluffed" by you, who is never mistaken in you, but is always absolutely and perfectly just to you, who do not even know how to be just to yourself. That is a happiness which does not indeed wholly destroy a loneliness which must sometimes come to all of us, but it makes it seem quite a little thing. There are people to whom that hymn, which to some of you must have seemed a strange one, is literally true:—

Jesu, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast,
But sweeter far Thy Face to see,
And in Thy Presence rest.

No voice can sing, no heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find
A sweeter sound than Jesu's Name,
The Saviour of mankind.

O Hope of every contrite heart,
O Joy of all the meek,
To those who ask how kind Thou art,
How good to those who seek!

But what to those who find? Ah! this
Nor tongue nor pen can show;
The love of Jesus, what it is
None but his loved ones know.

Well, but we are all his loved ones. I should rather have said "None but his lovers know." And this also I say to those whose difficulty is not that they have so few friends but so many, so few interests but so many (I know there are many of you here in this Guildhouse): when you feel that all has been drained out of you, that you have neither time, nor strength, nor perhaps even love to give any more because the world has taken out of you all that you had to give, to be in communion with God, to be in personal communion with Jesus Christ, is to be filled again with all that the world needs, with that divine love which your friends desire of you, to become like a conduit pipe through whom the love of God flows, instead of your empty, weary, shrivelled little self.

ON SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE

A LITTLE while ago I said in the course of a sermon that it was a very evil thing to try to set a good example, and I felt at the time that I must not leave it just there; for I feel very strongly that it is an easy little pitfall to fall into, and few of us wholly escape it. It really involves the value of reality, and perhaps one of the easiest ways to fall into a contempt for reality is the habit—so deplorably common among religious people—of trying to set a good example.

Why is it rather detestable to set a good example? I believe that, however surprised you may be to hear it put like that, in your hearts you do resent it, when you meet it. If you are conscious that somebody is doing something on purpose to set you a good example, you do not like it, do you? It gives a certain chill to your feelings about that person? I feel very strongly the truth of this in reading the Gospels. For the most part, our Lord's words and acts are set forth with such extraordinary simplicity, a simplicity that has sometimes prevented people from perceiving the wonderful literary beauty of what is

set down. It is simple; but there is in that simplicity an appeal which comes from the fact that our Lord's words and actions and thoughts were so single-minded, so sincere, that when there is even a suggestion of insincerity, I do not think it is possible to avoid feeling a certain chill. The picture that is given of our Lord in the first three Gospels is so irresistibly attractive that no one who has read them with a detached mind can fail to be attracted by the Person there depicted. But unfortunately it is constantly said to people who are not Christians—thinking and inquiring people—that the Fourth Gospel is the greatest of all the Gospels, and therefore they very often turn first to the Fourth Gospel, and are sometimes not attracted, but repelled. I think the reason is partly this—there are other reasons, but partly it is this—that the fourth Evangelist was so anxious to draw out the underlying significance of what our Lord taught, and said, that he sometimes seemed to make our Lord act a part. I cannot put it in any other way than that, but here is an instance. When our Lord was standing at the grave of Lazarus, we are told that he prayed.

Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou has heard me.

And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

Any of you who has ever read that chapter aloud, as many of you must have done, must have been conscious of the sudden shock of that extraordinary statement, "I knew that thou hearest me always; but *because of the people which stand by I said it.*"

I do not think there can be a moment's doubt that the Evangelist himself interpolated or put into our Lord's mouth these words, because he wanted to bring home to us the extraordinary significance of our Lord's prayer. There was no desire to deceive. St. John, or whoever was the author of this Gospel, was not writing a historical record, but a theological or philosophical treatise, and he wanted to bring out the significance of our Lord's words. We who read it today as though it were history and accurately descriptive of what happened, are, whether consciously or insensibly, repelled at the suggestion that our Lord actually prayed aloud in order to create a certain effect on the minds of those who stood by. One knows, of course, that it could not have been so.

Then, again, no Gospel gives so much space to the last evening of our Lord's life on earth with his friends, the Thursday before Good Friday, when he was sitting with them, sharing his last hours with them, and talking to them with such intimacy and such sacred and beautiful friendship. Some of the most lovely and touching, as

well as some of the most glorious sayings are found in those chapters in St. John, which give us our Lord's discourses to his disciples on that last evening. Then there comes the lovely scene of our Lord girding himself with a towel, and taking water and a basin to wash his disciples' feet. To wash one's feet was, in the east, a common usage, a common ceremony, constantly performed. During the day people walked the dusty roads of Palestine with bare sandalled feet, and to wash the feet was at once a necessary and ceremonious act. Our Lord did this service for his disciples, and then (the Evangelist goes on to say) he took off the towel that he had girded round him and sat down, and said to them, "I have done this for you in order to set a good example, for as I have done this to you, so ought you to do it to one another." I could be almost certain that one of the reasons why that lovely scene has never taken hold of our hearts, or moved us as does the scene depicted in the other three Gospels of the Last Supper which, quite apart from its sacramental or ecclesiastical significance, so touches one to read about, is partly because of that chilling statement, "I do this to set you a good example."

Surely no one who has ever been much waited upon can fail to understand why our Lord did this! He did not do it to set a good example; he did it because he wanted to do it. How many

hundreds of times must his disciples have washed his feet! How they must have loved to do it, perhaps with a kind of competing between them as to which of them should be allowed the honour of washing the dust from those strong, swift feet, which went everywhere about the hills and roads of Palestine, bringing news of peace, bringing health and life and beauty. It must have been a heavenly thing to do such a service for our Lord. You who have had such services done to you—and which of us has not sometimes, when we are ill or old or tired—do you not know how, sometimes, when the one who has looked after you is tired, it is a delight to say, "Now you sit down, and let me look after you." A wife, perhaps, who has always been waited on by her husband, will say, "Now you are tired, sit down. I will wait on *you*." Or it may be the other way about. But it is so instinctive, so human, and so dear to do these little material services for people. I am certain our Lord must have been moved by some such impulse. He knew that the time was drawing very short. The friends who had so often waited upon him would not be able to do so much longer. Now, he said, for this once let me wait upon you. And all the grace is lost if we think that his object in doing it was simply to teach them a lesson. It is well to be taught lessons sometimes, I know, but the lesson is singularly ungracious in its effect when it takes

the form of an apparently friendly act, and instead of winning, it repels us and so fails to achieve the thing it aimed at.

Look at the facts. You do a thing in order to set a good example; that is to say, in order to make other people do it. But to make other people do a thing, you must make them in love with the doing of it. You must make them desire to do it. Now, if they think you do it in order to create that effect upon them, they are merely exasperated. It takes a very holy soul to be attracted by a deliberately set good example. Most of us are repelled. Nor does it seem possible to believe that our Lord ever did this, because there was such an extraordinary directness of purpose in all that he did. He did everything he did because it was a thing that seemed to him worth doing; not with some ulterior object, not in order to get a good effect, or to create any kind of effect at all, he never did anything just to shock people, or just to please people. He taught us in parable after parable, in saying after saying, in act after act, the beauty and the worth of single-mindedness. That is really what the loveliest of all the beatitudes means. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." It does not mean physical chastity. It means singleness of mind—that singleness of mind which is so marked a quality in children and must, I think, be one of the reasons why our

Lord told us to "become as little children." A child's absorption in the thing that it is doing is amazing. It is a power that most of us lose as we grow up. Genius keeps it but most of us lose it, and it is a quality most dear to Christ. I have known a little boy of six who stood in a queue for one and a quarter hours in order to ride for two minutes on an elephant in the Zoo. At intervals of a quarter of an hour we went and asked him if he would not like to go away and ride on a camel or a llama instead; but no, he would not, and I believe if he had had to stand six hours he would have done it. There is a power of absorption in a child's mind when it is really concentrated on what it is doing, which is part of its charm. Real singleness of mind is a very lovable characteristic.

How constant it was in our Lord. His disciples were plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath Day, and the Pharisees appealed to our Lord to rebuke them because it was against their law. If there had been a shadow of double-mindedness in our Lord, if he had ever thought it a good thing to try to set a good example, he would surely have said to his disciples, "Now this is a very unimportant thing. It cannot possibly matter to you whether you pluck these ears of corn or not. Meanwhile, you are giving offence to some sincerely religious people. Therefore do not do it." What would have been the consequence?

He would have created the impression that he really believed that God cared whether they plucked ears of corn on the Sabbath Day or not. He would have given his formal adhesion to an idea of God which was dishonourable, narrow, and contemptible. He would really, although the matter seemed such a little thing, have undone his own work, for he came to reveal God in all his glory, his grace, his spaciousness, his freedom, and if he had sought for a moment—in order not to give offence—to "set a good example" to others, because after all it *is* good to keep the Sabbath Day holy—if he had said, "Refrain from doing this thing," it would really at the back of it have meant that he accepted the idea, and proclaimed it by his action, that these infinitesimal trifles are a matter of concern to God. It was the character of God that was concerned.

Or again, when he healed a man with a withered hand, he knew that people were watching to see whether he would do this on the Sabbath Day; yet he did it, and rebuked them. Might he not easily have waited till the next day? A man's hand does not wither in a moment! The affliction must have been slowly getting worse and worse for years. He might have said, "To-morrow I shall come and heal you," and the Pharisees would have been left without a pretext for offence. But our Lord would not wait for twenty-four hours, he would not give to any-

one the impression that he believed it wrong to do right on the Sabbath Day. He would not give the impression that such things are of value in the sight of God at all, for the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.

We do not keep the Sabbath Day any longer, but keep Sunday instead. Saturday is not any longer a holy day, but Sunday is, and how many times I have been urged not to do this, or that, or the other, on Sunday because "it will cause you to be misunderstood." What would be the real misunderstanding? I tell you it would be the idea that I thought that God cares about such things; and I do not think it. I am urged to avoid misunderstanding, but do I not actually create misunderstanding if I do what does not seem to me, in itself, a thing worth while, in case some of you should think that it was not important to have one day of rest and spiritual refreshment in a week? I do think it important. I think it very important. Well, now, if I drive my motor car on Sunday, shall I be setting a bad example to all of you? Yes? Well, I set it every Sunday: I tell you frankly. Every Sunday I set it, because I do not really think that God would rather have me walk from Hampstead to Victoria or go in a bus or a tube. I do not think these things matter. What matters is that we should take sufficient time in our lives to be sometimes consciously in the presence of God,

to have spiritual leisure. That is important, and certainly one day in seven is not by any means too much, and everyone should have that. But to do a thing that I myself think is of no importance in order to persuade *you* that it is a thing of importance, is dishonest.

Or again, our Lord shocked public opinion by sending away without condemnation a woman who was taken in adultery. They brought her to him and asked, "What do you think of this? What is your opinion? What do you say about it?" You may be asked such a thing some day. You perhaps, some of you who are in a public position. All of you at least have some circle of friends or relations to whom what you do may be of weight, to whom your position on a given matter counts for something. Somebody says to you, Here are two people who live together, without being married. You ask about their circumstances, and you find that they are doing what they, at least, believe to be right. You find that, in your own judgment of them, you—I speak for myself at the moment—think they are doing wrong. It is true that you know also a hundred things that are more wrong, but these are condoned by public opinion. You admit to your family circle someone who is cruel, who is mean, who is spiteful, who is disloyal, a coward, a skunk and a shirker, because public opinion has decided that these things do not matter very

much. You exclude from your circle, although not because of *your* moral judgment, these others, not because they are worse, but because the world's judgment has decided that they are worse, and if you admit them to your acquaintance, you may be "misjudged." You may be held to think that these things are of no importance, and you know that they are important. Perhaps you hold them tremendously important. Perhaps they are far more sacred to you than to some of those who judge you. And you argue with yourself, "I must not make it seem as though I did not think they were important." Well, and what about all those people who are cruel, and mean, and spiteful? You are not afraid to make these vices seem unimportant! You admit these people to your house, to your acquaintance! Are you not afraid sometimes that you are reversing the moral judgment of Christ? How easy it is for us now to read that lovely story in the eighth chapter of St. John! How easy to sentimentalise over it, and think how wonderful our Lord was, how gracious, and how courteous to this woman; and how shocked and scandalised were the people outside, the Pharisees and the others, how hateful they were, how mean and cruel! I do not know any chapter in the Bible, any passage in the Bible, that is more sentimentalised over than that little passage in St. John. You know, do you not, that it does not belong

there at all. It is not part of the Gospel according to St. John. It is thought that very likely it is really part of St. Luke, and has got in there by mistake. But anyone will tell you, even the most advanced critic, that it is a true story—an authentic record. It bears its truth upon its face, no one but Christ could have acted so. No one could have invented it. It is the very soul and spirit of Christ. It is so glorious and so lovely that Christ probably was told that he would be liable to be misunderstood. Should he not have joined in the condemnation of the world, for after all these things are condemnable? Why should our Lord lay himself open to the charge of thinking that he did not hold adultery to be a great sin? He did think it was a great sin. I think to one so loyal, so selfless, so glorious, it must have seemed a very great sin indeed. But what then? It was a less sin than the hateful cruelty, the prurient curiosity, of those who accused her, and he was not going, for anybody's sake, or for any consideration, to reverse his own standard of values. To him the cruelty and the meanness of the Pharisees who brought her there was worse than her conduct. Very well, he would let them see it. He would run the risk of being misunderstood. He would not do anything to conform to the world's standard unless it was truly his standard. In all that he did he was absolutely true to himself, so true that we can

see nineteen hundred years afterwards, that that little episode is true, although nobody will ever know who wrote it; because it belongs to the mind of the man of whom it was written.

We are all of us, in whatever situation we find ourselves, constantly tempted to act from double motives. Sometimes we say we are doing it to set a good example, when what we really mean, if we spoke the truth, is that we have not got the courage to set what the world will call a bad example. We have no moral courage, and so we do a thing which is dishonest. It is this setting a good example, doing what we do not really think is worth while, in order that somebody else may think it worth while, that corrupts our honesty, and so rots our very minds, that we do not even know what we think right, because we have not any moral courage. We think we did a thing to set a good example—to avoid causing others to stumble. If we were absolutely straight with ourselves we should see that very often that was not the real motive: the motive was a lack of moral courage.

We accept standards that are not ours because we do not want people to think something else about us that is wrong. We do not want people to think we think certain things are unimportant, and therefore we allow ourselves to act as though they were the most important things of all; and in that we deceive not only other people, which

is bad enough, but often ourselves too, which is worse.

Much of our work is wasted and spoiled because its apparent motive is not its real one. I remember a flourishing debating society that used to be held on Sunday afternoons in a poor part of East London. It was part of the work of a settlement. After awhile, the head of the settlement gave it up. People asked why, because it was a very good and flourishing debating society and did very interesting work. He said, "Because it did not lead to anything." And people said, "To what should it lead?" He replied that it had not led to any of them coming forward to be confirmed! That is a kind of double motive that is detestable. If you think it is a good thing to hold a debating society, hold a debating society, but do not hold it because it is going to lead to something else. Do not hold it because it will cause people to come to your church or to lend themselves to some end of which they had not an idea when they first came to it. I do not know of anything that has made organised religion more stink in people's nostrils than this double motive, this habit of doing a thing, not because it is worth doing, but because it may bring people to go to church. Let them go to church if they want to, or if you have anything on earth to offer to them when they come; but not because they have been led on step by step, doing things

that you did not really think were worth while in themselves.

If you do welfare work because you think it will keep the working classes quiet, it is much better not to do it. You will only arouse resentment. If you do it because you really desire their welfare, they will be conscious of that too; but if you do it from a double motive, or an undisclosed motive, the work is destroyed.

I often think half the complaints that we make about ingratitude are really due to the fact that our motives are much less noble than we imagine. Half the time we do kind things to preserve our own self-respect. We cannot respect ourselves, if we do not sometimes do a kind action. Well, then, you have preserved your self-respect! "Verily I say unto you, ye *have* your reward." Why do you expect gratitude on the top of that? Why should people be grateful for such kindness? You did not do it for their sake! You did it because you could not keep your self-respect if you did not do it. There are men who pray, our Lord says, standing at the street corners, that they may be seen of men. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." They did it that they might be seen, and they were seen. That is the thing that they wanted. Do they expect an answer to their prayer as well? Why, being seen was the answer. And so, in the things that we do to one another, very often if we probe

ourselves, we find that we are doing a certain thing because we have made a picture of ourselves, or our families have made a picture of us, or our friends, and we want to play up to it. We think, "I am a generous and impulsive person," and so we do generous and impulsive things. It would be a pity to have such a character and not play up to it! It is horrible to think how often one plays up to the part other people have invented for one, or we have invented for ourselves. Verily we have our reward. What more do we want?

There is no more subtle means of deterioration than to be always acting up to someone else's standards, always acting with a double motive, always pretending to be or think something which really we are not and do not think. Do you remember a passage in Mr. H. G. Wells' "The Soul of a Bishop," where the bishop was just going to lose his connection at a station, and there were a crowd of people between him and his train, and he wanted to push and shove, but he did not, because he knew it "would not do" for a bishop to push and shove. Have you not done things like that a dozen times? It would not do for you not to play up to the part that you are dressed up to! Of course, the unhappy bishop is always dressed up to his part and never gets a holiday. But you also are dressed up to your part, and often do these things unconsciously. You only suddenly realise—perhaps when it is

too late—that you were not doing them because they are or seem to you worth doing. You did not refrain from pushing people because you truly, earnestly dislike pushing them, but because it "would not do" for you to do it. And all the time you know, everybody knows, that the only thing in the world that carries any weight at all is reality; that reality is the only thing that makes any difference at all. All these things that we do for ulterior motives have no effect at all in the world, except this—that they sap our courage and our integrity, so that at last we do not know what we are or what we aim at.

If this sounds very desperate—for if we try to analyse our motives for doing anything, we are reduced almost to despair at the difficulty of ever acting from an absolutely pure motive—let us take comfort again. It is not a counsel of despair. It is a counsel of hope. What is honest in us does tell. It counts so surely and so certainly that we need not worry about anything else. It is the only thing in the world that tells in the end, and it is so certain that it does tell—that if there is one spark of honest thought in the mind of anyone here it will tell, will help, will save not only you but others, that you need not worry any more about whether people misunderstand you or not; you need not worry about the effect you are making in the world. It is like going into the open air to realise

that we need not worry about all that; that what we need to worry about is only our own honesty; that if we are honest we need not worry about whether what we do is going to be properly understood or rightly judged. Whatever is real in us is going to tell—and nothing else.

Suppose you are misunderstood by your own family or your friends. Suppose the things that you have tried to do best and noblest have been attributed to some mean motive. Suppose your world does not understand you. Suppose that you are trying and agonising to do better and people try to keep you in the old rut because they have always seen you there and do not believe you are ever going to come out. Suppose all the misunderstanding that you like. It does not matter. The world cannot imprison you in these misunderstandings. It cannot. Whatever is real in yourself is bound to win through, bound to tell, and it is a relief to the very soul to know that, after all, "only the Master can praise us, and only the Master can blame," that we have only one standard that matters, and that in proportion as we satisfy it we do "count" while all the rest passes and does not matter. There is only one way to avoid being either a hypocrite or a prig, I think, and that is to measure ourselves continually against the standard of Christ, which was so adequate, so perfect, so true. Do not mind if in the world's judgment you are con-

demned or misunderstood. Do not mind even if you must condemn yourself, but measure yourself against the standard of Christ, and in doing that you will be saved both from self-complacency and from despair, for you will know that whatever of reality there is in you, that our Lord can use and will use in the service of God.

ON MAKING GOOD RESOLUTIONS

DURING the next few days all properly constituted people will be engaged in making good resolutions. I say all properly constituted people, because the only ones who do not make good resolutions before New Year's Day are lazy people who think they have got far enough, or anyhow are not going any further, and who are mostly found among the old; cynical people who remind us that the way to hell is paved with good resolutions, and who are often found among the young; and prosaic people who point out that as a matter of fact nothing particular happens on December 31st—that this date is a purely artificial way of marking the passage of time; that it is quite as germane to make good resolutions on April 1st as on December 31st. But the rest of us—and let us hope the rest of us are in the majority—really do make good resolutions on every December 31st, and on January 1st we make a fresh start.

If you are not one of that majority I want you to join it to-night. For we are not as nice as we might be. We might all be better than we

are! That is true of all of us, even the saints, even the pleasantest and the most lovable. We all might be a little bit better than we are. We could all begin to be so now, for no one is too old to start, and we have all got to arrive some day at the idea that God has for us. It is no use thinking we shall be let off—at least I think not. I think the idea that God sometimes in the end gives us up is a lazy delusion. It is far more terrifying in a sense to realise that God will never give us up, and that if we do not make a fresh start at the end of this year the time will come when we shall have to make a fresh start, and the longer we put it off the further we shall have to go. That God of ours, who has been so wonderfully described by a great poet as the "Hound of Heaven," will never cease to pursue us. "Though I go down into hell thou art there also." And so through other states and other lives, perhaps, God will pursue us until we do decide to make a fresh start.

Why not now? Perhaps because there is a sneaking fear in our hearts—not only of the cynic, the lazy, and the prosaic, but in all of us—a little dread of making good resolutions because our minds go mournfully back to December 31st, 1923—1922—1921—as far back as we can remember—and, without being cynics, we cannot help wondering whether it is really worth while. We made such a deplorable mess of our resolutions

last time, and making them once more only reminds us what failures we made before.

Then, also, at the back of our minds is a feeling that it is very difficult for us to start again. There are so many things in our lives over which we have no control, which make it very difficult for us to be as nice as we really feel we might be. We let ourselves off, in our minds, because we reflect—and often quite justly—that there are many things which we cannot help, things outside ourselves; or if they are within us, we did not put them there! And these things make it extremely difficult for us to be hopeful about making a fresh start. I remember being struck with the fact that the teaching of psychology, especially when it is only rather crudely understood, sometimes encourages people in that hopelessness. Everything that they do wrong, everything that is disagreeable and difficult in their natures, is referred back to something that happened to them a long time ago, so long ago that they cannot be held responsible for it; something done to them by people who had charge of them when little. If your psychology stops there (as, with some people, it unfortunately does), it does make you feel you cannot really be any better. You cannot undo the past, you cannot eliminate the things that happened to you long ago, for which you are paying now, not through your fault. Therefore it seems as though you

might let yourself off the effort of trying to be a little nicer. I remember a boy who was told that all his difficulties arose from the way in which his parents had handled him when he was a child. He felt profoundly resentful against them. But it never seems to have occurred to him that his father, who was the chief offender according to the psycho-analyst, had very likely himself suffered from precisely the same mishandling when *he* was a child. I never saw two people more alike than that father and son! If therefore the son was what he was because his father had mishandled him, it is at least possible that his father was what he was because *his* father had mishandled *him!* In that case we are all in a vicious circle, unless all that has been done to and inflicted upon us by older people can be redeemed; unless it is possible for the individual to make a fresh start *in spite of all.* The vicious circle will go on for ever, from father to son, from generation to generation and, although we may learn to be a little more merciful in our judgment of one another, we are not really helped to make a fresh start.

In order to do that, we must understand where we now are, and cease to dwell with mournful insistence on what we were. What we *were* is no place to start from. We have to start, if we start at all, from where we *are.*

Two men lost their way in Ireland and asked

an Irishman to tell them the way to Dublin. He said, "If it was to Dublin I was going it would not be from here I would be starting." That is often our answer to the difficulties of life! We continually try to start not from where we are, but from where we are not, and when we fail we do not realise that it is because we do not take the situation exactly as it is *now* and start from there, but think to ourselves, "If I were going to heaven it is not these parents I would have chosen. If I were going to be good, attractive and lovable, it is not with this family, in this home, in this job, with this disagreeable set of people I would have started." But we can only start from where we are! Therefore we must take our situation as it stands, with all our parents' imperfections on their heads, and all our imperfections on our heads, and all the difficulties of work, family, surroundings, temperament, ancestors, and everything else *we* should have chosen otherwise—start with the whole set complete! That is what is meant by starting from where you are. Where you are is the only moment of time and the only foot of space you have really got for certain. It is the one firm place from which you can jump, and the best jumper in the world cannot jump from anywhere but where he stands. That is what most of us on New Year's Eve forget. We think we could make good if people had not made such a mess of our surroundings, and we do not

realise that this involves us in a vicious circle, for unless the individual is sufficiently master of himself and his circumstances to take them all and yet to make a fine life of it, the world will never be an inch further on than it is now.

Let us begin by being a little kinder to each other. "Who art thou that judgest thy brother? To his own Master he stands or falls, and he shall stand, for the Master has power to make him stand." With all the unkind and cruel things people have done to you, there are also some kind things you might have done and did not. As you were wronged and resented it, and feel that you can never escape from the injury so done to you, because it has cramped your very soul, so may you cramp, or not cramp, the souls of other people. If society has wronged you, given you the wrong work, taken away your vocation, done anything evil to you, do not you make common cause with all that wrong by doing the same to other people. We might take human kindness a little less for granted than we do. We take so much for granted.

And do not start from what other people expect of you. They do not know you, after all. Start from what God expects of you. We are told so often—and it is true—that most people react to what is expected of them. Almost all of us are, very largely, what people around us expect us to be. Suppose they do not expect

much of us? How shall we rise above that? Why, think what God expects of you! "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The great expectation of God, which some day you will have to meet—fix your mind on that. For it is true that we are what is expected of us, and if we turn away our wandering eyes always seeking the judgment of man, and fix them on God, we shall find an expectation, a divine waiting and patience for us to be some glorious thing. God knows what we are capable of. He knows us better than anyone else can. God expected the return of the prodigal son when anyone else would have given him up. God, in the person of our Lord, said to the woman taken in adultery, not only "Neither do I condemn thee," but "Go and sin no more." Was that not divine? "Neither do I condemn thee"; but more glorious still that last, "Go and sin no more." Put yourself in her place if you can, and think how difficult it was for her to "sin no more." A woman who has sinned in such a sense, and who is known so to have sinned, is thrust out of society in a way which it is probably impossible for us to realise unless it has happened to us. Perhaps some of those who spend their lives in trying to help such women understand it. Even now, when moral standards are supposed to be laxer—when there is at least a gentler attitude towards such

women—even now it is extraordinary how, when once a woman is publicly branded as a sinner, she will be pushed right outside the world, as though she were something incapable of human society, no longer human, a person who has lost her rights, fair game for any licentious man. This is the origin of that fable that a woman never recovers from such a fall; the world has taken care that she does not recover!

This woman, then, among the Jews, who drew a very hard line between the virtuous and the unvirtuous, this woman has been taken in adultery, in the very act, and surrounded by a crowd of men she is brought through the streets and set there before the Master for sentence. He says, "Go and sin no more." Might she not well ask, "How is that possible? How can I live at all when I am an outcast from society, when all the world knows what I have done? That I have done the thing that in a woman is unforgivable? How is it possible for me to sin no more? There is no other way of life open to me." And yet that story bears on its face the mark of its divine origin. No one but Christ could have said a thing so lovely and sublime. With the absence of condemnation is the expectation of a virtue which must in the future be heroic, "Go and sin no more." If it was possible for her so must it be possible for all of us. There is not a person in the world for whom it could

have been more difficult than for that woman. Yet God expected this heroic virtue of her, and expects it no less of you and me. If we have failed every year since we began to make good resolutions, if we are utterly weary of the business of making a fresh start, if our vices have become like a chain upon us, if we are slaves of big or little evil habits (and the little ones are often quite as hard to break and quite as destructive of the happiness of others as the big ones), still let us lift up our eyes from our own discouragement and the discouragement of others, and fix them upon the great expectation of God.

If we do this for ourselves, let us also do it for other people. I sometimes think if Christ had stopped at this, "Neither do I condemn thee," he would have been more cruel than kind. For there are many people who do not condemn us any longer for the things we do because they have ceased to expect anything better. We have been selfish, irritable, lazy, difficult, bad-tempered so long that they decide now to put up with us, and not to expect us to do better. They remind themselves that we have a difficult temperament, and that after all we have good sides to our character, we have good points. They will not ask more of us now.

"Neither do I condemn thee." If Christ had stopped there, as I say, he would have been almost more cruel than kind, but as he did not stop there,

do not you stop there either. Do not expect your friends to do no better. They are trying quite as hard as you, perhaps a great deal harder. Perhaps they have got a great deal further already than you realise, and while you are expecting them to walk along the same old road you are doing your best to keep them there. It is one of the most pathetic things in human nature that when a boy or girl, at the New Year, or on a birthday, or at some other time, with high resolve determines—what shall I say?—not to be late for breakfast! everyone says, "What! *you* punctual! What on earth has come over you?" Do you think that shy young soul will ever dare to be punctual again? Or if you are kind or brave—or anything that you have not been in the habit of being—what discouraging looks of surprise will greet you! Even if your relations (it is generally relations) do not say anything, they look it, and all the spirit goes out of you. Let us try not to hold other people back so. If you are not going to make any other good resolutions at all, make that one. *Believe* that the other people, not only your friends, though perhaps especially your friends, but all the people around you are really trying. Perhaps the thing we sneer at as another bad failure has already driven them almost to despair, because they had thought they were getting on a little better and suddenly they break down. If we had noticed more that

they were getting on a little better, and noticed less that every now and then they do break down, if we had shared something of that divine expectation of God for all the people around us, perhaps December 31st would not find them too discouraged to make any more resolutions at all. Do not let us be cynical about ourselves, but also do not let us be cynical about other people. Let them also start from where they are and not from somewhere where we saw them years ago.

The passing of time, the marking of the passage of time which we call the Old Year and the New, brings us into the presence of eternity. It is a strange paradox that these conventional periods and dates should bring us to eternity, but they do. We see things for a moment against the background of our own immortality. We realise, if only for an hour, that we must awake out of sleep and cast from us the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light. Here and now we set out; let us set out for something nobler, braver, freer than we have been in the past. The cynics tell us that the way to hell is paved with good resolutions; they forget that the way to heaven has a precisely similar pavement.

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